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Alexander Kojeve and the Russian Special Military Operation

Haz Al-Din[1]

Francis Fukuyama is famously regarded as the principal thinker of the American unipolar era, the period following the end of the USSR, characterized by the absence of any great political projects, ideologies, wars, revolutions, and causes for which men and women will risk their lives.

What many do not know is that Fukuyama's idea was not original, and itself drew from the work of Russian-French philosopher Alexander Kojeve, who articulates the idea of the End of History on the basis of the reconciliation that follows the Hegelian battle for recognition, or the master-slave dialectic.

For Kojeve, like Heidegger, human beings can be distinguished from animals in the radically temporal nature of their existence, defined by an openness toward the future which Kojeve does not regard as possible for animals or nature, whose development, in contrast to human history confines itself to fixed and eternal cycles.

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For Kojeve, this temporal dimension can be located in the reality of desire, for desire is aimed toward that which does not yet exist. And for Kojeve, the ultimate desire for human beings is the desire for recognition - recognition of their being by and through other desiring beings.

Man, for Kojeve, does not acquire any reflection of their unique and exceptional existence in nature or animals, but only in other human beings.

Yet human beings can only acquire recognition of the temporal nature of their existence to other human beings through struggle, by resisting any attempt to be reduced to the object of another's desire, by asserting the supremacy of one's own desire over another's, and over their own physical, biological existence.

Desire for Kojeve is profoundly negative and destructive with respect to positive determinations in reality. This is what places it in proximity with death.

In this way, war for Kojeve can be understood as being based in this struggle for recognition. However the outcome of the struggle, in the master-slave relation, proves unsatisfactory with respect to desiring beings. The master still longs for recognition, and in short, this initiates a process in which the slave ultimately acquires supremacy.

Kojeve quite naively regards the emergence of modern universal law (following the French revolution), which does not afford recognition toward any distinctions, particularities, hierarchies, estates, etc. between human beings as the ultimate realization of human desire and self-consciousness.

This is not since he regards the ultimate aim of human desire to achieve recognition on the basis of human equality. Rather, according to Kojeve’s ontology, humanity itself can be defined, in contrast to nature, on the basis of a substanceless, self-relating negativity which cannot find satisfaction in any real concrete determination. Thus, Kojeve appropriates the most conventional Marxist criticism of bourgeois law - that it is abstract, devoid of substance, and exists only in ‘form’ - to serve as a source of proof that only *in it* is the fullest realization of human existence possible.

The French Revolution, through the Napoleonic wars and culminating in the World Wars, all in their destructive wake increasingly tended toward the same conclusion, the triumph of modernity, the rights of man, and formal equality on a universal and planetary scale, which for Kojeve finally assumed the form of the global American system.

Since the struggle for recognition has finally concluded in the Universal and Homogenous state, the basis of war and political conflict in general disappears. Risking one's life for a cause effectively becomes meaningless, since there could no longer possibly be anything to prove through it.

Here enters the Nietzschean ”last man,” the passive ”human animal” concerned only with hedonistic fulfillment, the end of any human discourse and, paradoxically, the end of humanity itself. All of the ‘subjective’ aims of the human are finally accomplished. All that remains, for Kojeve, is attending to banal, mundane and ultimately meaningless biological, sensory, and physiological drives. Discourse, or logos reaches its fullest conclusion in the universal form of the law.

In contrast to traditionalist critiques of Western modernity, Kojeve in my view successfully accomplishes an immanent critique. He phenomenologically draws out the logic of bourgeois modernity to its fullest possible conclusion and thereby reveals its internal contradictions more clearly and more precisely than conservative and reactionary thinkers could ever be capable of.

The principal error of traditionalist and conservative thought in its appraisal of modernity is that its criticism is always levied *from without*. Kojeve, by contrast, elevates modernity to the status of something with real ontological stakes with respect to the very nature of human existence itself. He does not regard it as something avoidable, lamentable, or capable of being resisted in any way. He phenomenologically draws out the logic of bourgeois modernity and demonstrates how it concludes in annihilating its own most fundamental premise - the self-sovereign individual subject.

Kojeve begins taking for granted the rigid subject-object distinction which serves as the foundation of bourgeois philosophy. All that is human is defined as what is intangible, negative, formal, substanceless - the self-relating Cartesian subject - in contrast to the non-human natural world of tangible, concrete, positive, sensuous, etc. determinations. Kojeve goes much farther than classical bourgeois philosophy in drawing out its most monstrous, abominable and inhuman possible conclusions - conclusions that were evidently realized in the very reality of industrial capitalism and its destructive wars of annihilation.

For classical bourgeois philosophy, the actual *reduction* of the human to the substanceless ‘Cartesian subject’ was never a *necessary* conclusion. Such a

conclusion was rather implied by the practical reality of colonial subjugation, racialism, and capitalist exploitation. The gruesome and alienating realities of modern capitalist savagery were disguised under the hypocritical and false veneer of religion, morality, civilization, etc. - Thus no authentic subjective confrontation with the reality of alienation was actually possible. Kojeve, by *insisting* upon this reduction, tears away the sentimental veil of bourgeois hypocrisy and imposes the fullest existential responsibility for and commitment to the real (rather than imagined for the sake of coping) consequences of modern capitalism.

Kojeve begins with nothing else but the subject of bourgeois modernity - the Cartesian self-same subject, the *sovereign individual* of contractual association, the *atom* of capitalist sociality. He demonstrates the logical development of this such subject - not through a comprehensive analysis of material existence (as in the case of Marx) - but by fully accepting its implicit ontological consequences for the very *meaning* of what constitutes the human. Kojeve draws out these consequences by partaking in a *formalistic reduction*, not unlike the *Black Square* of Kazimir Malevich, which reduces the essence of humanity to the very constitutive alienation which lies at the foundation of modern capitalism.

The fullest acquiescence to capitalist modernity is simultaneously what *exclusively* permits the possibility of moving beyond it. And why? Because capitalist modernity is characterized by internal contradictions, and full acquiescence to modernity enables the possibility of allowing these contradictions to develop nakedly and without any distractions. This is precisely what is missing in conservative and traditionalistic critiques of capitalism: They fail to recognize how their very fantastical longing for a pre-modern condition itself participates in the ultimate modern alienation. Kojeve here, by means of phenomenology, embraces the logic outlined in the Communist Manifesto:

> *Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.*

Kojeve's ruthless modernism can teach us a lot about today's reality of global geopolitics. Russia and China - two states that bare the most important legacy of Marxist modernization - stand as the most powerful and effective opponents of the global hegemony. China and Russia were both *traditional* societies which adopted what is probably the most ruthless and unapologetic paradigm of modernization, Marxism, yet were simultaneously among the only civilizations that were actually able to successfully preserve traditional values in a modern age.

In the core of US imperial hegemony - North America, Europe, and parts of East Asia - modernization was accompanied by the most hypocritical veneer of religion, conservatism, human rights, etc. - yet simultaneously these societies today undergo the most intense cultural degeneration and alienation ever witnessed in the recorded history of mankind. That is since bourgeois ideology avoids confrontation with the real consequences of bourgeois civilization itself. It displaces the cold and ruthless subjective consequences of modern capitalism by indulging in fantasies of traditional, natural, wholesome existence. It thereby deepens, rather than resists, said inhuman alienation.

Thus, Kojeve is correct to *begin* by accepting the irreversibility of modern civilization, and refuse the reactionary temptation which Heidegger and other critics of phenomenological modernity, by contrast, could not bring themselves to abandon. He is correct to make due on the reductive presumption that *Cogito Ergo Sum* is a definitive ontological claim. The presumption that reduces all Being to an indeterminate negation may not be a necessary conclusion of *philosophy*, but it is indeed an actual fact of modern capitalist civilization.

It may appear at first that attributing to capitalism an *ontological* significance casts it as a timeless and unsurpassable reality. However, to comprehend the reality of humanity in a way that is *anything less* than the same reality of present conditions is what is certain to render impossible a comprehension of post-capitalist existence. As Lenin put it - Marxists must be as radical and revolutionary *as reality itself*. If one is unable to give the devil their proper due, and thereby *account* for the possibility of the emergence of modern capitalist civilization within their comprehension of reality, one regresses into an impotent, and, rather humiliating position of moralism. According to this position, the emergence of modern capitalist civilization was a mere 'misstep' of subjective judgement. Had only previous generations been more moral and more wise! This excises from history the dimension of *meaning* itself, reducing it to one great mistaken absurdity.

It excises from the ultimate ‘moral’ choice implied by the present ‘correct position’ (to ‘abolish’ capitalism and ‘abolish’ injustices, etc.) the dimension of *necessity*. In order to prove the historical necessity of socialism, it is simultaneously necessary to not only prove the historical necessity of capitalism, but to *include* this latter necessity in the former: To *account* for the past historical necessity of capitalism in the *current* necessity of socialism. To *assail*, rather than liquidate, in the very logic of the present movement all that is *essential* and *necessary* in the reality of the past.

Kojeve implies a notion of the human that, at minimum, rationally accounts for the reality of humanity in modern capitalism: A humanity defined entirely in opposition to nature, concreteness, and the world of positive determinations. A humanity defined by the supremacy of *pure form* over all particular content. By developing the contradictions which arise inevitably from such an ontological premise, Kojeve phenomenologically reflects the development of the contradictions at the heart of industrial capitalist modernity - in a manner devoid of all distractions and fancies of a subjectivity struggling in vain to resist them.

After the triumph of modernity, what desperate attempts to cling to ‘substantive determinations,’ fancies of consciousness, ideals, fantasies, notions of family, nationhood, religion, and cultural tradition neglect is the active and living reality of *negation*. By *mincing* in the face of the destructive reality of capitalism, one simultaneously suppresses any relation to the active and constitutive element of such concrete, human determinations. They become fossilized and empty forms, receptacles of the same formalistic nothingness characteristic of the ‘universal and homogenous state.’ In Heidegger’s terms, they become beings whose familiarity and ‘idolatry’ deepen the forgetting of *Being in general* - the phenomenological opening which casts into the realm of uncertainty and contingency the existence of all beings.

The rise of modern capitalism evidently corresponded to a new disclosure and forgetting of Being, a new decisive confrontation with the living essence of mankind and history in general. Nothing less than a full acceptance of *all* that is at stake in it - *not one step back* - could possibly constitute an authentic relationship with the movement of world history.

However, the principal error of Kojeve is that after having shown the internal contradictions of classical western modernity - in both the concept of desire (and the rigid subject-object distinction it implies from Descartes) and politics

(the principle of equality before the law), and how their development paradoxically culminates in the annihilation of their original terms - namely human beings, substantive, particular determinations, nature, etc. - he does not propose any re-examination of the metaphysical commitments of classical modernity originally taken for granted.

After having shown the fullest development of *one side* of the contradiction which partakes in the phenomenal essence of capitalism - absolute and complete triumph of the realm of pure subjectivity, spirit, form, difference, negation, etc. over the substantive, concrete, natural, etc.- he continues to treat the other, 'darker' side of the contradiction with dismissive frivolity. Kojeve speaks of meager 'animal' desires, cycles, and habits in opposition to the higher realm of pure forms. He does not draw out any qualitative consequences for the notion of the former amidst taking to its fullest logical conclusion the latter.

The problem is that Kojeve is unable to appreciate the *objectivity* of contradiction itself. One side of the contradiction - the radically temporal, intangible dimension of 'spirit' or negativity - acquires full supremacy over the other side, of nature, particularity, and the realm of determinations. Yet he does not then re-examine nature, particularity, concreteness, and determination as *nothing more* than the *negation of the negation,* so to speak. He accepts the premise of 'frivolous' and 'meager' positive determinations, but how they come to be through the dialectic itself in the first place does not seem to interest him.

Within bourgeois metaphysics, positive determinations are mere 'raw material' for the negative, liquefying movement of abstract, 'pure forms.' In other words, they exist *only to be distinguished from*, only to serve as standards of what is precisely not real, true, and essential. To whatever extent humanity acquires determination - in culture, habit, belief, convention, etc. - it establishes precisely what is *not truly* human, avant-garde, or ontological. Or as Goethe put it - all that exists deserves to perish, for reality is the mere movement of nothing to nothing.

Responding to this by attempting to conserve said determinations in the face of the destructive movement of modernity is ultimately vain. On the other hand, the *negation of the negation* (which truly does preserve the traditions and determinations of human history) is finally accomplished not when the 'destructive negation' of modernity is outright rejected, but when it is recognized to itself participate *as a moment within* the dialectical existence of concrete determinations.

As Hegel put it - *Being and Nothingness are the same*. Any one-sided comprehension of positive determinations which places them *in opposition* to the destructive negation represented by the 'pure form' of modernity can only, and in a roundabout, tragic way, reproduce - nay, even deepen - that same destructive negation. For example, nothing is more sacrilegious, and nothing acquiesces more to nihilistic, bourgeois atheism than contemporary online religious ideologies.

Kojeve rejects this roundabout philistinism, and decides to directly give expression to what he perceives to be the active, victorious, and triumphant tendency of world history since the French revolution. Only, by failing to appreciate the objectivity of *both terms* of the contradiction at the heart of this tendency - Kojeve enters a blind alley with respect to the emergence of a new category of the political around the postwar period: Namely, the *Partisan* so famously described by Carl Schmitt.

The Partisan precisely embodies the vicious return of heterogeneity with respect to precisely the 'Universal and Homogenous state. As a radically non-state actor with precisely no regard for the universal forms and conventions of law, the Partisan reintroduces particularity, contingency, temporality, and concrete *human* (rather than animal) existence back into the end of history. For the partisan imposes upon the form of the law the necessity of confronting *its own* real content.

On the one hand, that it is its *own content* appears to imply said form already possesses total supremacy over it. But if one accepts the *objectivity* of the contradiction itself, it is clear that the opposite is true. In the movement of *nothing to nothing*, the real content *is not* nothing - but the very movement itself as a positive determination. The real content of the Universal and Homogenous state is *partisanship*, just inasmuch as the real content of modern capitalism is the proletariat as a class.

Whereupon the Universal and Homogenous state comes to regard *itself* as an object, it itself acquires particular determination. Hence from the self-relating, recursive modern logic of Party politics within the Bolshevik movement, a more sacred, ancient, and profound sensibility with respect to the reality of all Russian history and civilization could be reawakened. How it is that *the steel is tempered*, how concrete, particular determinations actually arise was rediscovered. The whole of hitherto, premodern history could thus be

‘forgiven,’ since its essential and constitutive element was finally rediscovered through a simply *consistent* commitment to modernity itself.

The Partisan is nothing more than a partisan, an agent, *of a Universal and Homogenous state* (a universal and homogenous state *in particular*). In this sense, Curtis Yarvin was correct to state that communism is as American as apple pie. Communists really were just *consistently* applying the logic of American universalism - and, thanks to dialectical laws - this ended up allowing them to rediscover its precise opposite, namely, the reality of the particular and the concrete.

Whereas the citizen is a passive, static subject of the Universal modern state, whose rights and freedoms are passively guaranteed from without, the Partisan is the active subject of a (future or present) state-power suspended in temporality, which must constantly reproduce itself in the living realities of war and existence.

Partisan subjectivity reflects a fundamental schism within the ontology of classical modernity itself. A schism that can by no means by reduced to the development of its terms, but is rather something itself particular, definite and objective, and thus suspended in temporal existence.

Kojeve correctly understood in the Universal and Homogenous state the annihilation of the individual subject, taken as a human being that can somehow, in their individual existence, satisfy the object of their desires and the cause of being. But he took a step too far by confusing this for the annihilation of humanity.

He failed to grasp how this radically impersonal dimension of the Universal and Homogenous state then imposes upon the individual the dimension of Partisanship, subjective partiality - the splitting of the subject between individual experience and the reality they share with the 'object.' A partisan is not one who insists upon meager individual interests. They fully subordinate and dedicate their individual existence to the whole they form a part of.

How the 'universal and Homogenous state' itself interpellates Partisanship in the particular determination of its totality, in being 'this-way' rather than 'that-way,' is a notion especially important in our multi-polar age.

The 'this way' is neither the consequence of a voluntary choice, nor a mere passive repository of 'natural/biological' determination. It is really *the*

movement of nothing to nothing - not a timeless positive form - put a particular pattern and movement by which all forms are constituted and reconstituted out of their content.

This content can be understood as the reality of the very contradiction out of which arises the homogeneity of form.

The 'Universal and Homogenous state' acquires determination when it descends into the recesses of its own content. When the power of the state is reduced to the barrel of a gun - but also, when it finally demonstrates an extra-formal and extra-legal clemency toward its own material premises.

When the cruel, blind and merciless power of the state, indiscriminate as it is to particular and individual determinations, finally shows mercy toward its own real premises which it is powerless to itself formally determine.

In the exact same way that it cannot formally determine the necessary means toward its authority (the barrel of a gun).

This is what establishes the ultimate content of absolute recognition.

This relationship constitutes a definite totality of state power - Warrior-Dynasty, or Party-Dictatorship that opens the horizon of struggle for Partisans.

For Schmitt, the Partisan is not necessarily an anarchist or a criminal who simply has no regard for laws. Rather, the Partisan emerges under circumstances of conflict between radically incommensurate political powers, which Schmitt also defines as a state of ”absolute political enmity.”

This is not simply the master-slave dialectic between individual subjects, but a more fundamental conflict within the ”resolution” itself, between the form and the content - the fact that it does not resolve itself fully in the intangible and abstract dimension of law, but continues to reproduce itself in ways that produce forms that contradict such a conceit.

In the state of absolute political enmity, partisans have ALREADY acquired recognition. The enemy becomes a type of object, for whose destruction any and all means are permitted. No time is wasted in desires' longing for recognition. For, as Kojeve correctly observes, said recognition is already achieved in the emergence of the ‘universal and homogenous state.’ Only, the *real state* exists only in the dark shadow of the overt law.

The best example here is the introduction of political modernity in non-Western peripheral civilizations. What Russians, Chinese, Africans, people in Latin America were fighting for was exactly what the colonial core had already acquired- universal equality, modern rights, popular sovereignty, etc. And yet these were.and continue to be sources of radical antagonism for the West and its 'universal and Homogenous state' in the form of international law and ”human rights.” Why? Because non-Western peoples committed the crime, by making it itself an object, of giving the ‘universal and homogenous state’ the particularity of a specific determination.

Is this simply a consequence of greed, hypocrisy, and arrogance on part of the neocolonial West?

Or might it attest to a more fundamental metaphysical conflict, not necessarily between definite and distinct civilizations, but an antagonism at the heart of modern universalism itself - between distinct post-hoc responses to the all-consuming negativity of modernity (which Kojeve articulated in terms of temporality and desire).

One which concludes in the conceit of a pure form, and the other which continues to be suspended in fidelity toward the living nature of contradiction itself as object.

And this pure form is evidently not the pure form of law, which today's global hegemony has no problem transgressing - but the pure form of negation, nihil for its own sake, over and against all particular determinations as the ultimate expression of the supremacy of humanity over all existence.

For the longest time, Russia, China, and other ‘authoritarian’ states were regarded as less dynamic, more backward, and struggling to ‘catch up’ with the West. But over the past decade, a curious phenomena has revealed itself: As they ‘catch up’ to the West from behind, they end up surpassing it - since the ‘creative destruction’ of Western modernity increasingly liquefies its own premises at an exponential rate - while in the East, these premises are preserved within a rational and totalizing integrity of history. The very thing that had rendered the East more ‘backward’ and ‘behind’ is actually allowing it to now surpass the West.

What better characterizes today's destructive global capitalist hegemony than the maddening heights of contemporary Western nihilism? What better

characterizes such a pure form than the same commodity form described by Marx - and more specifically, the hegemony of the US dollar?

For Marxism, the antagonism at the heart of modern civilization is precisely known as the class struggle, which Marx regarded as the engine of all historical development itself.

Kojeve's contribution to Marxism is that he emancipated it from the methodological individualism of the Second International, according to which individuals constitute the subject of class struggle, that classes are merely the sum-total of individuals.

He correctly identified in the real object of human desire not the mere satisfaction of meager needs, but a type of recognition within which that quality within the individual that makes them more than a mere individual, more than a ‘meager determination’ is fulfilled, and true collective existence is possible.

Thus with the assistance of Kojeve's theory, it becomes possible to locate class struggle precisely in the dimension of the ”Universal and Homogenous State” rather than at the immediate level of individual experience.

But taken as an object within which not only human desire, but human existence itself finds satisfaction, it is possible to comprehend the 'Universal and Homogenous State' beyond the narrow limits of modern legal formalism that Kojeve wrongly took for granted. The next decisive step is to re-insert the new conception of humanity implied by the ‘universal and homogenous state’ back into its very ‘atomic’ premises - to acquire a new understanding of tangible, concrete individual existence. And the emergence of partisan subjectivity - from Che Guevara to Donbass and Palestine - precisely points the way with respect to this.

Following 1917, the class struggle and radical antagonism described by Marx began to acquire a geopolitical dimension global in scale - between liberal democracies committed (hypocritically) to the ”purely form” of law and ”authoritarian” states committed to Partisan determinations of statehood.

What the SMO has precisely returned into the spotlight, despite the end of the USSR and the overt ideology of Marxism, is precisely the same struggle which was initiated in 1917. And it is precisely since this struggle has acquired an *objective*, even *ontological* dimension that it is entirely beyond reduction to any specific ideology. ▉

2

Is Hegelian Dialectics Incompatible with Traditional Logic?

Carlos L. Garrido[1]

Introduction

Since dialectics emphasizes the positive role of contradictions as the engine of change, or in G.W. F. Hegel's words, as the 'root of all movement and vitality,' some have taken this to mean that dialectics is incompatible with the formal/abstract structure of traditional logic and with its laws of identity, non-contradiction, and the excluded middle – the three which are at the core of traditional logic as the 'laws of thought'.[2] As Allen Wood has noted, for many

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2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, Translated by A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press International, 1993), 439. Bill Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1912), 112.

the ‘baffling side of Hegel’s philosophy is his repudiation of traditional logic, his avowed denial of the principles of identity, contradiction and excluded middle’.[3] Since ‘Marx and Engels appear to agree with this point,’ Wood argues, ‘it is often a stumbling block to the understanding and acceptance of dialectical thinking’.[4] This observation, however, is one-sided and incorrect. Its error stems from the *either-or* form of engaging with the two logics, or, as Hegel would put it, its error stems from the limitations of the understanding. Contrary to the incompatible dichotomy the understanding imposes on the two logics, I will argue that dialectical and traditional logic are compatible, that each corresponds validly to different spheres of observing reality. Insofar as each does not overstep the bounds of its sphere, the two can serve to enrich the process of knowing the world in its utmost concreteness.

When the two logics are artificially antagonized, however, the fruitfulness each has in its own sphere is stifled and an artificial fetter is created in the process of knowing the world concretely. To prevent mistakes in our comprehension of the world, it is important to clarify the terrain; to show where traditional logic rightfully reigns and where, because of its immanent limitations, it must necessarily hand the baton to dialectical logic. This compatibilist strategy will unfold itself through a close reading of Hegel’s treatment of the issue in his *Science of Logic* and *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, where I will first focus on his critique of traditional logic’s three ‘laws of thought’ and the abstract and formal character of its methodology, and then demonstrate how his critique – in opposition to how some have understood it in the past – is not a wholesale rejection of traditional logic, but a demonstration of the fields of thinking it should be limited to as a *science of thinking*.

Hegel on Logic's Need of a New Shape

Hegel’s *Science of Logic* is one of the most arduous readings in the history of philosophy. There is, as Terry Pinkard has noted, a ‘proclivity for testing out various hypothesis without telling us that this is what he is doing’.[5] This makes Hegel’s text a pot of gold for misreadings, strawmen, and crude simplifications. The misunderstanding which artificially antagonizes dialectical and traditional logic can be traced to a misreading of how Hegel presents the task he is

3. Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 199.
4. Wood, *Karl Marx*, 199.
5. Terry Pinkard, *Hegel’s Dialectic* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), 64.

embarking on in the *Science of Logic*. Hegel contends that whereas other sciences have continued their development, 'logic shows no traces so far of the new spirit which has arisen in the sciences'.[6] The 'baldness of the merely formal categories' in traditional logic understands logical forms as 'fixed determinations… [separated] from each other and not as held together in an organic unity'.[7] When logical forms are grasped in this manner, Hegel argues, 'they are dead forms and the spirit which is their living, concrete unity does not dwell in them'.[8] Traditional logic, by focusing on abstract, separated, and fixed logical forms, is deficient in accounting for the constant immanent development of the 'living spirit,' i.e., the Idea. If logic is to serve its function as the 'science of thinking,' it must be able to keep up with the 'inner self-movement' of its content.[9] For this to take place, Hegel argues, logic must take a new shape.

> *The conceptions on which the Notion of logic has rested hitherto have in part already been discarded, and for the rest, it is time that they disappeared entirely and that this science were grasped from a higher standpoint and received a completely changed shape.*[10]

Upon a superficial first sight, it might seem that Hegel is presenting a clear case for the incompatibility of traditional logic and the 'new' dialectical logic. This reading, as I will show below, is abstract, insufficient, and wholly sustained on synecdochal readings of Hegel's engagement with the question. Nonetheless, it is true that for Hegel the new logic emerges in a 'completely changed shape' to overcome the old's 'childish game of fitting together the pieces of a coloured picture puzzle'.[11] A 'total reconstruction' in logic, Hegel argues, is required to appropriately regain its function as the science of thinking the idea in its interconnected immanent dynamism.[12] This reconstruction is at its core methodological; and the new method which corresponds to the reconstruction is for Hegel 'the only true method'.[13] What does this new method consist of? He says that

6. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 26.
7. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 38.
8. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 48.
9. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 43, 53.
10. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 44.
11. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 53.
12. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 51.
13. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 53.

> *All that is necessary to achieve scientific progress … is the recognition of the logical principle that the negative is just as much positive, or that what is self-contradictory does not resolve itself into a nullity, into abstract nothingness, but essentially only into the negation of its particular content… and therefore the result essentially contains that from which it results… It is a fresh Notion but higher and richer than its predecessor; for it is richer by the negation or opposite of the latter, therefore contains it, but also something more, and is the unity of itself and its opposite.*[14]

For Hegel, the 'most important aspect of dialectics' is 'the grasping of opposites in their unity or of the positive in the negative'.[15] This would seem to put this new method at odds with what are known as the three laws of thought: the law of identity, the law of non-contradiction, and the law of the excluded middle. Hegel deals with these three laws directly in chapter two ('The Essentialities or Determinations of Reflection') of the *Science of Logic*'s book two on the Doctrine on Essence. Let us now examine closely what he has to say.

Hegel on the Three `Laws of Thought'

1. The Law of Identity

The law of identity – 'everything is identical with itself, A = A' – is for Hegel 'nothing more than the expression of an empty tautology'.[16] He uses the example of a plant: if one asks, 'what is a plant?' and the reply comes in – 'a plant is a plant,' everyone will unanimously acknowledge this is true; however, everyone will also admit that 'the statement says nothing'.[17] The unanimous truth recognized in the statement is merely a 'formal truth, a truth which is abstract, incomplete'.[18] The first flaw Hegel notes in the law of identity, then, is its emptiness.

Hegel asserts that this 'first law of thought,' when interrogated, also blurts out its internal contradictions.[19]

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14. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 54.
15. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 56.
16. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 413.
17. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 415.
18. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 414.
19. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 413.

> *[The Law of Identity expresses an] empty identity that is rigidly adhered to by those who take it, as such, to be something true and are given to saying that identity is not difference, but that identity and difference are different. They do not see that in this very assertion they are themselves saying that identity is different; for they are saying that identity is different from difference; since this must at the same time be admitted to be the nature of identity, their assertion implies that identity, not externally, but in its own self, in its very nature, is this, to be different.*[20]

As Hegel had already shown in the various categories that appeared before this section, the interrogation of the categories the understanding (and old logic) held as steadfast opposites, when critically examined, show themselves to have their truth in their unity with their opposite. This is seen in the contradiction that arises when the category of identity is pressed, namely, identity itself presupposes, i.e., contains within it, its opposite – difference. When one thinks of identity, Hegel says, 'it is identity as difference that is identical with itself… truth is complete only in the unity of identity with difference'.[21]

On the one hand, the law of identity, Hegel shows, expresses merely a formal, empty truth. On the other hand, the law of identity contains internally, i.e., implicitly (*ansichseiende*), non-identity. Identity presupposes difference. What Hegel has shown is how the abstract, formal level in which old logic retained the law of identity stripped it of any content, of any meaning, and left it internally naked. Additionally, the separation traditional logic created between its categories – and here the categories of identity and difference in specific – is shown to be a farse. As Hegel asserts in his *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophic Sciences*,

> *Contradiction is the very moving principle of the world: and it is ridiculous to say that contradiction is unthinkable. The only thing correct in that statement is that contradiction is not the end of the matter, but cancels itself. But contradiction, when cancelled, does not leave abstract identity; for that is itself only one side of the contrariety. The proximate result of opposition is the Ground, which contains identity as well as difference superseded and deposited to elements in the completer notion.*[22]

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20. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 413.

21. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 413, 414.

22. G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Translated by W. Wallace (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874), 192.

The contradiction and incompatibility of identity and difference, Hegel shows, is only a seeming (*Schein*) contradiction. Terry Pinkard calls this approach the 'compatibilist strategy,' it is an attempt to 'show that some apparent incompatible basic set of categories can actually be shown to be compatible' by 'using some new category or set of categories to show the conflict is only apparent'.[23] This is what Hegel has done with the law of identity, namely, show how the category of identity and the category of difference, far from being incompatible, are contained within each other in unity.

However, the contradiction that immanently emerged when the concept of identity was questioned in its immediacy has not been fully annihilated, but overcome, i.e., sublated (*aufhebung*). This is what the process of the 'negation of the negation' entails, namely, a 'preserving' of the old in the new.[24] The contradiction-as-resolved is contained in the new 'higher' term which resulted from the concluding movement. In the case of identity and difference – as a moment of the logic of essence – the new term which includes within it this previous process, the 'unity of the positive [identity] and negative [difference],' is ground (*grund*).[25]

2. The Law of Non-Contradiction[26]

The law of non-contradiction is for Hegel merely the 'negative form' of the law of identity; it holds that 'A cannot at the same time be A and not-A'.[27] As the negative form of the law of identity, when its positive form is overcome (as it was in the last section), its negative form is too. However, Hegel still dedicates a few pages to breaking down the law of non-contradiction.

Playing with the way the law of non-contradiction is often referred to as the law of contradiction, Hegel says that from its name what the law should express is the truth that 'everything is inherently contradictory'.[28] If it did, Hegel argues, 'this law in contrast to the others [would] express the truth and the essential

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23. Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic*, 7.
24. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 126.
25. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 435.
26. Hegel calls it the law of contradiction; it is known under both names. However, I will adjust it to the law of non-contradiction when it appears in a reference from Hegel. Considering what the law means, I think 'non-contradiction' is a much more appropriate way of referring to it.
27. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 416.
28. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 439.

nature of things'.[29] However, this is not what the law says, in fact, the opposite is true. The law of contradiction, instead of holding contradictions as the 'root of all movement and vitality,' says the opposite; namely, 'there is nothing that is contradictory'.[30] When this form of ordinary thinking (as it is seen in the understanding and traditional logic) is slapped in the face with contradiction, Hegel argues, 'it ranks [it] in general as a contingency, a kind of abnormality and a passing paroxysm or sickness'.[31] But this goes even against common experience, which doesn't simply see contradictions as an error external reflection ran into, but holds that

> *There is a host of contradictory things, contradictory arrangements, whose contradiction exists not merely in an external reflection but in themselves. [Contradictions are] not to be taken merely as an abnormality… [but as] the principle of all self-movement.*[32]

The emergence of the problem of change in ancient Greek philosophy supports this. Zeno of Elea was correct in pointing out the contradictions present in movement; however, Hegel argues, 'it does not follow that therefore there is no motion, but on the contrary, that motion is existent contradiction itself'.[33] As Adam Schaff would later go on to note, 'when investigating the possibility of movement Zeno *already* presumes that a body cannot 'be' or 'find itself' there otherwise than by *resting there*'.[34] Zeno's basic error, Schaff argues, is his 'attempt to 'reduce' motion to a succession of states of rest'.[35] This fails to see how 'movement cannot be explained by rest nor reduced to it'.[36] Hegel says that 'something moves, not because at one moment it is here and at another there, but because at one and the same moment it is here and not here, because in this 'here,' it at once is and is not'.[37] Schaff's reformulation of how copulas are understood helps to explain what Hegel means. Instead of the Eleatic

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29. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 439.
30. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 439.
31. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 440.
32. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 440.
33. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 440.
34. Adam Schaff, 'Marxist Dialectics and the Principle of Contradiction,' *The Journal of Philosophy* 57:7 (1960) 247. https://doi.org/10.2307/2021865.
35. Schaff, 'Marxist Dialectics and the Principle of Contradiction,' 248.
36. Schaff, 'Marxist Dialectics and the Principle of Contradiction,' 248.
37. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 440.

understanding of the copulas ‘is,’ ‘be,’ or ‘finds itself,’ as ‘*it rests*,’ they must be understood, instead, as ‘*it passes*’.[38]

For Hegel, something is ‘alive only in so far as it contains contradiction within it’.[39] Using some of the most trivial examples possible, Hegel shows how ‘each determination implies its opposite’.[40] The concept of father can only be understood in relation to its other, the son. Detached from its relationship, from its unity with the concept of ‘son,’ the concept of ‘father’ is null; all that is left is the man which, when related to a ‘son,’ can exist with the determination of ‘father.’ The same goes with the concepts of ‘up,’ ‘right,’ etc. All of these are concepts which must be understood in their relation, in their unity, with their opposite. In mathematics and computer science this would be called ‘mutual recursion,’ each concept is definable only in relationship to its other, to its opposite. In all of these cases, the truth of each antipodal point is in their unity with their other. As V.I. Lenin states, ordinary thinking is able to see these opposites, but in failing to go deep enough it misses what ‘is the most important,’ namely, the ‘transition from one to the other,’ i.e., how ‘father,’ ‘up,’ right,’ are known in their truth only when their opposites – ‘son,’ ‘down,’ ‘left,’ – are recognized as internal, necessary components for the unity of the concept.[41]

Because ordinary thinking, i.e., the thinking involved in the understanding and traditional logic’s ‘law of non-contradiction,’ ‘abhors contradictions as nature abhors a vacuum,’ it is unable to grasp anything more than dead being.[42] Contradiction is the basic principle of movement, and hence, of life. Where there is no contradiction, there is no life. Contradiction is not a ‘blemish, an imperfection or a defect,’ but the basic law of the living.[43] However, that which ‘is inherently self-contradictory’ (everything), ‘is no less contradiction resolved.[44] Contradictions arise but in so doing create the conditions to be overcome. In the developments of contradictions in nature, social life, and the human mind, there exists the capacity for an enriched reconciliation. Pinkard’s compatibilist strategy is not something which is formulated externally to where

38. Schaff, ‘Marxist Dialectics and the Principle of Contradiction,’ 248.
39. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 440.
40. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 441.
41. V. I. Lenin, ‘Conspectus of Hegel’s Book *The Science of Logic*,’ In *V. I. Lenin Collected Works*, vol. 38, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 225.
42. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 442.
43. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 442.
44. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 442.

the contradiction appears, but out of the contradiction itself the capacity for overcoming it arises. If philosophy appears on the scene when contradictions arise, philosophy's method must be – amongst other things – immanent. It must be able to show how all living things run up, in the course of their development, against seeming (*schein*) contradictions which, although presenting a momentary roadblock, create the conditions for the sort of redirection that overcomes the contradiction while containing it within itself as a necessary moment in its development.

3. The Law of the Excluded Middle

In the law of the excluded middle traditional logic's faulty understanding of opposites is 'made into a law' which holds that 'something is either A or not-A; there is no third'.[45] To this, Hegel says that,

> *Neither in heaven nor in Earth, neither in the world of mind nor of nature, is there anywhere such an abstract 'either-or' as the understanding maintains. Whatever exists is concrete, with difference and opposition in itself.*[46]

The proposition itself, Hegel argues, cannot but break its own 'either-or' fixation. For Hegel, the excluded middle, the universal something which the law claims cannot be indifferent to the opposition of A and not-A, is in the proposition itself – in the *something*. The same proposition which excludes a third term posits one, 'the third that is indifferent to the opposition is given in the law itself'.[47] It is a self-defeating law, no different than statements like 'there are no sentences longer than three words,' 'there is no truth,' etc. To say that something is either A or not-A is to express a proposition which has sublated both A and not-A.

Hegel's treatment, in the *Science of Logic*, of the fault in this 'law' is a bit more confusing than his treatment of the former two. In part, this is because he only takes one short paragraph to explain himself. Considering the law of the excluded middle is implied in the law of identity, and subsequently, in the law

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45. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 438.
46. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 192.
47. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 438.

of non-contradiction (the negative of the law of identity) as well, the ground for this law has already been torn. This law presupposes the former two; it presupposes an identity *A* which is not its opposite, *not-A*. But in the section on identity Hegel already showed how all identity is mediated by and exists in a unity with non-identity (difference). Hence, there is no A which, when pressed, is not in unity with not-A. When the law of identity is sublated, the law of non-contradiction and the excluded middle are too. The law of non-contradiction is but the negative of the law of identity, to overcome the law of identity is to simultaneously overcome the law of non-contradiction. Further, the law of the excluded middle is implied, that is, is *grounded,* on the law of identity. Once its ground – the law of identity – is overcome, the law of the excluded middle hovers like a cartoon cat which has overran a roof, subsequently falling when made self-conscious of this.

Hegel's treatment of the law of the excluded middle is short. In his section dedicated to it, he 'wittily' shows how the law is self-defeating.[48] However, his critique of the law is supplemented by a backdrop of arguments which had already overcome the central principle the law of the excluded middle depended on – the law of identity.

Has Hegel Rejected the Three `Laws of Thought'?

Having examined Hegel's assessment of the so-called three fundamental laws of thought, it might *seem* obvious that the 'new' dialectical logic Hegel develops is incompatible with the three laws which stand at the core of traditional logic. However, this is only a seeming contradiction. What Hegel has done, when analysed concretely, is show how these three 'laws of thought,' 'instead of being true law[s] of thought, [are] nothing but the law[s] of abstract understanding'.[49] Therefore, when Hegel's comments on these laws are analysed more concretely, this seeming incompatibility falls apart, and both are shown to be efficient logics (sciences of thinking) for different forms of thinking corresponding to different spheres of analysis. Traditional logic and its three 'laws of thought' are indeed the laws for a specific type of thinking – the understanding. However, for more concrete, richer, and livelier forms of thinking, these 'laws' are insufficient, and hence, not 'laws' in these spheres. To provide a simple example, this is parallel to saying that the laws under which

48. Lenin, 'Conspectus of Hegel's Book *The Science of Logic*,' 138.
49. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 184.

primitive societies functioned are insufficient, as laws, for the forms of social life which exist today. These laws might be perfectly suitable for certain forms of social life, but, once qualitatively new forms of life, richer, livelier, and more complex in nature arise, these laws, like the form of life itself, is overcome.

However, the 'laws of thought,' whether in traditional or dialectical logic, are themselves grounded, and work alongside, different methods of exploring the world. Traditional logic's method of working is abstract, it is indifferent to content and purely formal. Dialectical logic's method of working is concrete, it seeks not only to know form in unity with content, but further, how this unity relates to all those things it presupposes in its existence within a given organic totality. It is of order here, then, to provide a cursory comparison of the two logics with an eye to their distinctive treatment of the methodological question of the abstract and concrete.

Traditional and Formal Logic: Abstract and Concrete

Traditional Aristotelian logic is formal and abstract. Its instruments are fixed categorical sets which are seen as separated by hard and fast lines. The formal nature of this logic makes it indifferent to the content it is dealing with. This logic, because of its formal nature, can access the 'validity' of propositions in a manner indifferent to their content. The forms in which propositions are structured in an argument is the source of its validity. The famous syllogism – 1- All men are mortal, 2- Socrates is a man, 3- Socrates is mortal – is valid regardless of whether a concrete study of 'Socrates,' 'Men,' or 'Mortality' confirms the statements in the propositions. The argument is valid because it necessarily follows. However, this 'necessity' is merely formal, it is an empty necessity insofar as the content of its propositions is not verified. This formal treatment of propositions allows for the examination of their validity to go beyond being merely indifferent to content, and to abstract wholly away from all content by treating propositions symbolically.

The argument above is no less valid if the terms 'Socrates,' 'Men,' and 'Mortal' are replaced with variables A, B, and C. One could then say – 1- All Bs are Cs, 2- A is a B, 3- A is a C – and it would be as equally logically necessary and valid as – 1- All men are mortal, 2- Socrates is a man, 3- Socrates is mortal. The aim of this cursory overview of traditional logic is to set the ground for my affirming of the following: namely, that the assessment traditional logic makes

is grounded on an abstraction away from the content and an examination of the purely formal structure of the ideas presented. The conditions, i.e., the determinations which lay in the backdrop of concepts like ‘Socrates,’ ‘Men,’ and ‘Mortal’ are to be ignored. The idea is reified, abstracted and conceived of as a separate and self-subsisting entity to examine its isolated form in relation to other isolated ideas.

Dialectical logic, on the other hand, does not bifurcate form from content, putting each in a time-out corner divided by an impenetrable gulf. Instead, it knows that form and content ‘spontaneously pass over into one another or, since they are reflections, posit themselves as sublated, [and] relate themselves to this their negation and reciprocally presuppose one another’.[50] For Hegel, it is philosophically erroneous to attempt to know form separated from content, and content separated from form. When any specific thing (unity of form-content) comes under philosophic examination, the aim of this examination is to know the thing concretely. Simply stated, the thing is not isolated in preparation for its investigation as a separate, severed fact; but it is analysed in the plethora and complexity of factors that allowed it to be a ‘fact.’ The thing is analysed in a way that accounts for the interconnections and relations that the thing presupposes. Dialectical logic is essentially relational, it seeks to know how things relate themselves to other things within an organic totality.

If the juxtaposition of the two logics regarding the question of identity and contradiction did not fully prove their incompatibility, the analysis of their divergence in the methodological question of the abstract and concrete should be the final nail in the coffin, right? The response here should be yes and no. On the one hand, the response should be ‘yes’ because a concrete analysis of the two showed undoubtedly that in ontological and methodological grounds, the two find themselves opposed. The dialectical method is concrete, it does not shy away from ‘tarrying’ with contradiction in a way which shows its illusory, although immanently necessary, nature. Once this is done, the dialectical method proposes a new concept which incorporates within it the developments of the previous one. This concept is considered ‘higher’ or ‘richer’ simply because it contains more determinations, that is, because it is a more concrete concept. In almost all of its central components, the dialectical method finds itself in opposition to traditional logic. Hence, it is true that dialectics and traditional logic are incompatible… to some extent.

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50. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, 473.

On the other hand, the previous 'concrete' analysis does not exhaust all of the determinations possible for this comparative object of examination. Simply said, it is possible to go deeper, to be more concrete. When dug deeper, one finds that this blatant incompatibility is superseded by an acknowledgement that their incompatibility is but a regional skirmish; that on a larger frame, that is, when their relationship is analysed as it exists in a 'totality' of knowing, or better yet, of 'scientifically' knowing different forms of thinking, the two are perfectly compatible.

How Are Traditional and Dialectical Logic Compatible?

In 1808 Hegel writes a short article for popular consumption asking himself the question 'Who Thinks Abstractly,' his response – shocking to the crowd, but expected by those familiar with his work – 'the uneducated, not the educated[,] good society does not think abstractly because it is too easy, because it is too lowly'.[51] However, this 'lowly' form of abstract thinking, Hegel would argue, is appropriate in specific areas of examination.[52] In his 1830 *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* he says the following:

> *The study of formal logic undoubtedly has its uses. It sharpens the wits, as the phrase goes, and teaches us to collect our thoughts and to abstract — whereas in common consciousness we have to deal with sensuous conceptions which cross and perplex one another. Abstraction moreover implies the concentration of the mind on a single point, and thus induces the habit of attending to our inward selves. An acquaintance with the forms of finite thought may be made a means of training the mind for the empirical sciences, since their method is regulated by these forms: and in this sense logic has been designated Instrumental.*[53]

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51. G. W. F. Hegel, 'Who Thinks Abstractly,' In *Hegel: Texts and Commentary*, Edited by W. Kauffman (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 462.

52. It is important to note that the 'abstract' Hegel is referring to in the article 'Who Thinks Abstractly' is related to empirical (i.e., experience based) abstractions. It is the passing of judgement based on immediate appearance; quite literally, the judging of a book by its cover. This is a different form of the same 'abstract' thinking we see in logic, except the passing of judgement is not based on immediate appearance but on the immediate form of an argument. Recall, the form/content opposition is examined as a moment of the broader appearance/essence opposition. Similarly, the abstraction that focuses on the form of an argument and the one which focuses on the appearance of a phenomena are at their core grounded on the same type of thinking – abstract thinking.

53. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 33.

In his 1831 *Lectures on Logic*, Hegel would similarly say that

> *We must familiarize ourselves with such forms of the understanding as Aristotle brings forth – they are forms of thinking, abstract forms and one-sided laws. Yet if they are to be of service to true thinking, we must not interpret them so separately from one another, [as Aristotle does,] since they would then be only forms of untruth, finite forms. They would then be only so many different sides of concrete truths, and so would be one-sided. We must tear them out of their one-sidedness and bring them into their interconnection. It is because of such one-sidedness that logic has fallen into contempt, and with good reason… Though absolutely indispensable, they are in themselves defective. Still, one must be able to give an account of them, as to why they are false and absolutely indispensable… We shall come to know them only as moments of the true form. This true form can be fully rational logic only insofar as it is a logic in which thinking has won the dignity of being the basis of truth.*[54]

For Hegel, then, although formal logic might have been sublated by dialectical logic in the realm of philosophy, that is, the realm where 'thinking becomes knowledge… through notions,' this is not the only sphere were thinking takes place; and hence, where a corresponding 'science of thinking' is required.[55] In the elementary spheres of mathematics and science, which are infinitely useful and productive for human social life, the formality, abstractness, and conceptual reification present in traditional logic shows itself to be the more apt way of scientifically structuring and investigating these forms of thinking. To use a frequent expression from Hegel, in these spheres (elementary science and mathematics) traditional logic has already 'won its truth.' The Idea which philosophical cognition traces and which leads it into dialectical logic may have overcome those spheres into higher and richer ones, but those spheres are still there, and the logic which conceptualizes their laws and categories still works.

For instance, today face recognition technology is in most devices as one of the more advanced technological features of recent developments. Nonetheless, technologies like doorknobs, which won't magically open if you put your face in front of it, which require the gripping of it by the hand, and the subsequent

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54. G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Logic: Berlin 1831*, Trans by Clark Butler (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008), 4-5.

55. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 247.

turning of the hand in the right direction for it to function, are still around. The device with face recognition features is a higher form of technology – it contains more determinations; it is more concrete – but it still exists around technologies which its development presupposed (the phone presupposes the doorknob) and whose usage requires a different method. The method (the equivalent here of logic) employed in the higher technology would not function for the simpler technology. Similarly, the simpler method employed for the lower technology would not work with the more advanced technology. In the same way that my face will not open a doorknob, a tight squeeze and turn of my phone will not open access to my phone.

This might seem like a simplistic analogy, but the point is this: once something is overcome, not only does it stay contained as a 'moment' within that which it progressed into, but, often, it itself stays existing alongside the 'higher' forms that are implicit in it, and which, through historical development, have been actualized and made explicit. The mental and physical labour that led to the development of the phone (and facial recognition technology) presuppose the mental and physical labour which led to the development of the doorknob, that is, it contains it within itself as a necessary 'moment.' However, they both exist alongside each other. The objectification of labour which resulted in a doorknob contained implicitly the phone, that is, the 'real potential' for labour (combined with a host of other factors) to eventually actualize (objectify) itself into a phone. What was implicit in the labour embodied in the doorknob (the phone), was made explicit with human technological progress. But the doorknob, as a result of human labour, still contains implicitly something which has already been made explicit – the phone.

A similar dynamic is at play in the way Hegel thinks about the relationship of dialectical logic to traditional logic. The development of the content of logic (thinking), required a new logic apt to function as the 'science of thinking' for the new developments. It required a logic that could accept thinking in its dynamism and interconnections. However, simpler mathematical and scientific forms of thinking – for which the abstract and reified structures of traditional logic work – are still around. Not only are they still around, but, using the same methods of traditional logic, they have developed immensely. This development is undeniable. Neither Hegel nor anyone in the tradition of dialectical thought would reject this admission. Neither would any of them neglect the foundational role traditional logic played in their development. However, what would be stressed is that these developments and the

knowledge that they have resulted in are un-systematic in nature, that is, they lack a self-conscious awareness of their concrete existence within a totality.

Hence, science has made tremendous progress *in its field*, but this progress has always been detached from an awareness of the role it plays in the greater whole of human life. In this way, science has been able to 'pass' itself as 'non-ideological,' as disconnected from global economic and political structures. In the same way, it has also been able to detach itself from its own historical development. As Samir Okasha argues, school 'textbooks present the key ideas of a scientific discipline in as convenient a form as possible, with little mention of the lengthy and often tortuous historical process which led to their discovery'.[56] Sure, some historical hypothesis that have been overcome are still studied, but their study is as a dead entity. Their past is not considered to be alive and well in their present, but something that has been simply left behind. Science does not see their current developed form as the making explicit – the actualizing – of a collection of previously successful and failed hypothesis. Instead, the few links that are established to their past have an external and arbitrary character, that is, the 'development' is not considered as an immanent result necessarily stemming from previous scientific theories.

The traditional logic upon which these fields are grounded has been essential in achieving developments of a particular character in their specific fields of investigations. This is something the dialectician accepts and praises. For instance, computers, which are so central to our technological world today, operate on 'simple yes or no procedures' which are grounded on the binaries of traditional logic.[57] Insofar as the lens of analysis is in this field of discovery-production, dialectical logic plays no role, traditional logic is king, it holds truth. However, if one desires to know these developments in a lively manner, in their movement, relations, and positions with regard to the whole of human knowledge production and development, traditional logic falls short as a science *for this form of thinking*, dialectical logic here shows itself to be superior. As Sean Sayers notes with regards to analytic thinking (which is grounded on traditional logic),

> *Analysis—distinguishing and separating things in this way—plays a vital role in knowing and understanding things. Dialectic does not deny this. It*

56. Samir Okasha, *The Philosophy of Science* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 2.
57. Alan Woods and Ted Grant, *Reason in Revolt: Marxist Philosophy and Modern Science* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2002), 96.

> *does not deny the reality of distinctions and the need for making them in thought. However, it insists that concrete and determinate things are also always and necessarily related and connected to other things within a larger whole.*[58]

Dialectical logic here takes the 'facts' discovered by science and removes them from the laboratory of abstraction, places them in the field of the concrete where it can analyse it relationally and historically.

The incompatibility of dialectical and traditional logic, then, only appears when one incorrectly bleeds into a form of thinking that it, as a science of thinking, is not functional for. It holds the same relationship as quantum and classical mechanics, each is efficient for different fields. It would be foolish to claim this fact implies they are incompatible. As Alan Woods and Ted Grant argue,

> *The relationship between dialectics and formal logic can be compared to the relationship between quantum mechanics and classical mechanics. They do not contradict but complement each other. The laws of classical mechanics still hold good for an immense number of operations. However, they cannot be adequately applied to the world of subatomic particles, involving infinitesimally small quantities and tremendous velocities…Formal logic equally holds good for a whole series of everyday experiences. However, the laws of formal logic, which set out from an essentially static view of things, inevitably break down when dealing with more complex, changing and contradictory phenomena.*[59]

Dialectical logic, if it was the ground on which certain elementary scientific investigations took place, would stifle development. Traditional logic, if it was the ground on which systemic and concrete investigation took place, would fail to contend with phenomena in their interconnection and movement. However, if each science of thinking could stick to the forms of thinking appropriate to it, there would be no real contradiction between the two. The contradiction would be shown to be only a seeming contradiction. They would show themselves to be as compatible, in the greater scheme of things, as doorknob turning and face recognition technology, or as classical and quantum mechanics.

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58. Sean Sayer, 'The Rational Kernel of Hegel's Dialectic,' *International Critical Thought* 12:2 (2022) 330.

59. Woods and Grant, *Reason in Revolt*, 90.

This realization, of course, is itself dependent on a dialectical assessment, for it is grounded on knowing the *relation* of each logic within the *totality* of knowing. Since the dialectical method has for its end the concrete reproduction of the concrete ("the unity of diverse determinations"), it understands this isn't something achieved at the beginning.[60] Instead, it realizes the necessity of process, of the ascension from the abstract to the concrete. As Marx would note, the "reproduction of the concrete by way of thought" is "not a point of departure" but the result of "a process of concentration."[61] In the abstract (embryonic) moments of a dialectical investigation of the concrete, this is where a role for traditional, abstract logic can be found. Once enough information about elementary facts has been gathered to begin to see these in their interconnection with other facts and with the totality it is a part of, then traditional logic has finished serving its role for the dialectical method's ascension towards the concrete reproduction in thought of the concrete.

The claims of their incompatibility, on the other hand, stem from the inability (grounded in traditional logic), of comprehensively analysing thinking with an eye towards relations and totalities, as opposed to detached, abstract, entities. Dialectics, because it is a superior form of logic with a more dynamic and concrete object of investigation, is the method through which one could understand how these two seemingly oppositional sciences of thinking are compatible and allies (conscious allies for dialectics, and unconscious allies for traditional logic) in the general scheme of human knowing.

When the relationship of traditional and dialectical logic is analysed dialectically, even the positing of the question of 'compatibility' seems strange. Dialectical logic does not stem out of a vacuum, it is itself a development of traditional logic, i.e., traditional logic contained implicitly the real potential for realizing itself in dialectical logic. Here the 1979 Soviet textbook, *The Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy*, gets it absolutely correct:

> *Dialectical logic arose as a continuation and development of previous logical theories [traditional logic]… it does not deny the importance of formal logic, but seeks to define its true place in the study of scientific knowledge… differing in quality from formal logic, dialectical logic does not consider the forms of thought only from the standpoint of their structure; it is also interested in their concrete content [and] considers*

60. Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, 13.
61. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (New York: Penguin, 1973), 101.

> *them not in a rigid, isolated form, [like traditional logic does], but in their interconnection, in motion and development.*[62]

Hegel uses the example of science (which as previously seen, is grounded in traditional logic) to illustrate how dialectical 'philosophy owes its development to the empirical sciences'[63]:

> *The facts of science have the aspect of a vast conglomerate, one thing coming side by side with another, as if they were merely given and presented — as in short devoid of all essential or necessary connection. In consequence of this stimulus ['craving of thought'], thought is dragged out of its unrealised universality and its fancied or merely possible satisfaction, and impelled onwards to a development from itself.*[64]

Hence, like the example of face recognition technology and the doorknob, dialectical logic contains traditional logic as a necessary 'moment' in its development. Just like face recognition technology exists alongside doorknobs, dialectical logic exists alongside that out of which it grew, that is, it exists alongside that which contains it implicitly in it, and which relates to it as an external actualized form of something immanent in it. In a sense, to question the compatibility of these two would be like questioning the compatibility of phones and doorknobs. Or, to use a Hegelian favourite, it would be like questioning the compatibility of a bud with the fruit that it bore. Instead, one must think of them in their connection, in their 'organic unity,' how each exists within 'the life of the whole'.[65] Thus, Hegel acknowledges that 'Speculative Logic contains all previous Logic and Metaphysics: it preserves the same forms of thought, the same laws and objects — while at the same time remodelling and expanding them with wider categories'.[66]

However, even if one recognizes the sustained reign of traditional logic in fields like science and mathematics, the actuality of dialectical logic makes it so that the findings of science 'cease to be…mere data'.[67] Dialectical logic

62. F. V. Konstantinov, et. al., *The Fundamentals of Marxist-Leninist Philosophy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982) 184.
63. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 17.
64. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 15-16.
65. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 2.
66. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 12.
67. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 17.

assimilates scientific findings and exposes something scientific thinking was blind to about its own findings – their dialectical nature. As Hegel says,

> *Philosophy, then, owes its development to the empirical sciences. In return it gives their contents what is so vital to them, the freedom of thought… These contents are now warranted necessary, and no longer depend on the evidence of facts merely.*[68]

This is to say, dialectics gives scientific findings a systematic character, it contextualizes them within 'the larger picture.' Further, for Hegel, that traditional logic and dialectics are compatible is already contained in the more general observation that all 'the different systems which the history of philosophy presents are therefore not irreconcilable with unity'.[69] What a layperson observes as a historical progression of different and often antithetical philosophical systems, for Hegel is merely 'one philosophy at different degrees of maturity'.[70] 'In philosophy the latest birth of time is the result of all the systems that have preceded it,' hence, dialectical logic and speculative philosophy are the unified, most developed expression of all previous philosophy.[71]

Allen Wood states that Hegel's 'real complaint against formal logic (as it is meant by formal logicians) is not that its principles are false, but that it is philosophically sterile'.[72] While this is partially true, he misses the fact that Hegel recognizes that in science and mathematics traditional logic is far from being 'sterile.' In these areas it has been the ground for immense development. It has, however, been incapable of truly understanding the nature of its developments concretely and systematically. For this to occur, something which was implicit in it had to be actualized – dialectical logic. This actualization of dialectical logic does not, as Wood suggests, mean that the new method 'turn[s] out to be false'.[73] The truth acquired by the fields in which traditional logic reigned does not disappear when the new dialectical method arises. On the contrary, its truth is expanded beyond disconnected datums of information, it is enriched by its further concretization.

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68. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 17-8.
69. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 18.
70. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 18.
71. Hegel, *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences,* 18.
72. Wood, *Karl Marx*, 205.
73. Wood, *Karl Marx*, 200.

Further, the discoveries that are grounded on traditional logic are only 'philosophically sterile' if they are retained within the understanding prevalent in the elementary sciences, mathematics, and the subsequent fields in which traditional logic predominates. The antidote to this philosophical sterility is their natural inclusion in the philosophically fertile dialectical outlook. Wood seems to equivocate philosophical with scientific sterility, and then, shames Hegel for not accepting the philosophical developments traditional logic has achieved through mathematics and science. However, the developments he points to are developments in the *sciences and in mathematics*, the 'non-philosophical' sphere in which Hegel thinks traditional logic is still very much fertile. In addition, for Hegel these developments are not bound to 'philosophical' sterility, insofar as they are incorporated into the systematic and concrete knowing present in dialectics, he believes they become philosophically important. This is, Hegel argued, what dialectical philosophy 'gives back' to the sciences.

Conclusion

The concrete analysis of traditional and dialectical logic resembles the movement of the negation of the negation seen all throughout Hegel's logical writings. The immediacy of traditional logic is forced to confront an external enemy – dialectical logic. Their contradiction, when further investigated, shows itself to be only 'seeming.' Dialectical logic is shown to be an inner development of traditional logic, a result of the contradictions which develop in traditional logic's incapacity to keep up with the thinking for which it is a 'science' for. This process of immanent mediation gives way to the reunited form of mediated immediacy which is present in the awareness that dialectical logic contains traditional logic as a necessary moment and that it exists compatibly alongside it, enriching its truth by giving it philosophical significance. Far from being incompatible, traditional and dialectical logic are necessary allies for the comprehensive and concrete investigation of the world.

3

Will Cuba Be the Next Syria?

Danny Shaw[1]

An Ethnographic Portrait of Youth, the Blockade and Survival in Havana Today, the 66th Anniversary of the Revolution

After 14 years of a Western economic blockade and dirty war, the Syrian Arab Army (SAA), the state of the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party and the deposed president Bashar al-Assad collapsed on December 8th.[2] While there were many factors at play in this long internationalized proxy war on Syria, quite simply the Syrian people were worn down by well-armed Al-Qaeda offshoots backed by Turkey, Israel and the U.S.[3] After losing over 128,000 SAA troops since 2011 and hundreds of thousands of civilians, the country of some 30,000,000 people with some 14,000,000 refugees fell to the forces of colonialism,

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2. Danny Haiphong, “Syria War HUGE Win for Erdogan & Netanyahu as 'Rebels' Oust Assad w/ Prof. Mohammad Marandi”, December 20, 2024, posted December 9, 2024, by Danny Haiphong, YouTube, 18:38, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-ML1RP_5ds

3. Richard Medhurst, “Syria Update”, December 20, 2024, posted December 13, 2024, by Richard Medhurst, YouTube, 3:03:20, https://www.youtube.com/live/o6G5q0IzBvA.

Zionism and barbarism[4]. Syrian SAA soldiers were only making $40 a month and often could not even be paid. The rebranded Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), ISIS fighters were making thousands of dollars per month thanks to their imperialist backers. 90 percent of Syrians endured poverty and hunger due to the U.S.-led hybrid war. [5]

Minus the bombs and ISIS cutouts, Cuba is up against a similar reality. Argentinian sociologist Atilio Borón, analyzing the impact of Western sanctions on South American and Caribbean countries, explained that hunger was more dangerous than any bomb imperialism could drop on the Bolivarian nations. Keenly aware of an air-tight blockade inflicting acute hunger and despair on the 11,000,000 people of Cuba, Cuba supporters and internationalists have a responsibility to ask: Before the most powerful empire in history, how much longer can the revolution hold on?

Cuban Flames, Imperialist Tundra

There are two January showdowns shaping up in the Caribbean. On January 1st 2025, the 66th anniversary of the revolution, Cuba will officially become a member of BRICS. On January 20th, Donald Trump and his cabinet of billionaires will take state power in the United States.[6] Trump enacted a further 243 coercive measures against Cuba when he assumed office in 2016.[7] The Biden administration continued to tighten the noose around Cuba. The U.S. has not recognized Nicolas Maduro, Cuba's closest ally, as the president of Venezuela. They are recognizing opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez. This sets up a clash for inauguration day on January 10th, 2025 which the U.S. is looking to exploit. The Department of Defense just signed an agreement with Trinidad and Tobago which allows them "to deploy forces to Trinidad and Tobago in the event of a "conflict" in Venezuela."[8] Credible international

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4. "Syria Refugee Crisis Explained," USA for UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, posted March 13, 2024, https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/.

5. "Syria Refugee Crisis Explained, "USA for UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, posted March 13, 2024, https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/.

6. "Trump's 243 measures against Cuba," Walter Lippmann, posted January 20, 2021, https://walterlippmann.com/trumps-243-measures-against-cuba/.

7. Walter Lippmann. "Trump's 243 measures against Cuba." *CubaNews*. January 20, 2021. https://walterlippmann.com/trumps-243-measures-against-cuba/

8. T&T Newsday (@Newsday_TT), "NATIONAL Security Minister Fitzgerald Hinds signed off on five agreements with the US on December 10, two of which can allow the US Department of Defense (DoD) to deploy forces to Trinidad and Tobago

sources from the multipolar world are expecting another U.S.-supported July 11th 2021, San Isidro-style coup attempt against Cuba in the opening weeks or months of Trump's second term. All signs are that Cuba and Venezuela could go the way of Syria

As a boxer, internationalist and scholar, I have been traveling to Cuba since 1995 seeking to objectively measure the enthusiasm of everyday people who survive despite the U.S.'s War on Cuba.[9] For almost three decades, I have followed up with the families with whom I have met and built friendships, bolstering my own understanding of this resilient island nation.[10] This study is a snapshot of the nuanced, blockaded Cuba that I have experienced.[11] It is vital to present an honest evaluation of what we were clearly unaware of in Syria, where Cuban hearts and minds are at currently, amidst the profound social contradictions created by the U.S. economic war. I originally wrote a draft of this study in 2014 as a warning to the U.S. left that it was dangerous to underestimate the objective factors in Cuba and the subjective factors, people's consciousness and a tidal wave of Cubans forced to flee the country. Some "movement leaders" dismissed my observations as "overly focused on the lumpen elements in Havana."

A decade later, I am sounding a more desperate warning. If the U.S. left does not get off the beaten path of the solidarity delegations, they will again be in the dark when Havana explodes because of hopelessness and hunger. None of us who defend Cuban self-determination should be surprised if another foreign-sponsored and coordinated revolt occurs.[12] Every U.S. regime, Republican and Democrat, since 1959 has applied a full court press against

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in the event of a "conflict" in Venezuela." Twitter (now X), December 12, 2024, https://x.com/Newsday_TT/status/1867177087368368308.

9. Danny Glover and Oliver Stone, "The War on Cuba," December 17, 2024, posted October 9,2020, by Belly of The Beast Cuba.YouTube, 12:42. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z1mknIkBGUA&t=2s.

10. I have been to Cuba five times. I first went to Cuba in 1995 as a representative of the July 26th Coalition, a delegation from the United States that stood against the U.S. blockade of Cuba and participated in the International Festival of Youth. I returned for a month in 2001 again focused on learning from and listening to Cuban leadership and the Cuban people. In the summer of 2014, I returned through Cuban boxing contacts related to Sumy. I attended Fidel Castro's funeral in November of 2016 screaming "Yo Soy Fidel" ("I am Fidel") shoulder to shoulder with generations of Cubans. I returned to Cuba at the close of 2022 to continue collecting ethnographic data to finish this study.

11. While I have traveled to Santiago, Matanzas and across Cuba, I spent most of my time in the capital, Havana.

12. "Foreign Agents #1: Exposing the San Isidro Movement & US culture war on Cuba" The GRAYZONE, posted July 29, 2021,https://thegrayzone.com/2021/07/29/foreign-agents-san-isidro-movement-cuba/.

Cuba, attacking economically, diplomatically, politically and militarily.[13] The U.S. hybrid war, like the 14-year war on Syria, has for decades laid the fertile soil of despair in order to set in motion another San Isidro-style, color revolution movement to try to topple the Cuban government.

"Ataca Sabroso" (Attack with the Sweetness)

Sumy is a slender 6'2" retired fighter. At 60 years old, he could pass for 39. Known for a long, stiff jab that snapped heads back, the retired fighter turned long-time high school principal assures me he's still got it. For two decades, Jesús Miguel Rodríguez Muro, known by his nickname "Sumy," glided through cruiserweight boxing competitions across Cuba. Internationally, he made a name for himself as well, fighting in the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries. His cousin Lazarro Almanza was my trainer in the Bronx as I prepared for Tri-State area fights. Almanza left Cuba in 1980 as part of the Marielitos.[14]

Boxing emerged as an organic way to *convivir* (live together), that is learn more about Cubans, their lives and challenges.[15] When Sumy held the pads for me and heard the snap of my double jab, he shouted "*sabroso, sabroso*" (sweet, sweet) and announced the next combo he wanted.

After our workouts, he took me around different neighborhoods where I heard a plethora of views on politics, the economy and the blockade. A dedicated member of the Cuban Communist Party, Sumy lived in Arroyo Naranjo, an outer municipality of Havana, their version of the Bronx. The dark-skinned retired athlete lives as all Cubans do: modestly. His feet swung off his ramshackle tiny bed. He had a collection of books and notebooks stacked on a bookshelf that was on its last leg. A tiny TV straight out of the 1980s and a transistor radio that we Americans might see in the Hollywood movies about the Vietnam war furnished his bedroom, which moonlighted as a living room. He invited me in and gave me two volumes of Cuban history textbooks by

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13. This was the term used by the Reagan administration for its war on the Soviet Union's existence. Trump called the war on Cuba "a maximum pressure" campaign.

14. The Marielitos were Cuban immigrants to Southern Florida in 1980 when the Cuban leadership decided it was more strategic to allow anyone who wanted to leave the country to leave in 1980 from the port Marielito. Roughly 135,000 Cubans left that summer.

15. Danny Shaw, "Las Antillas Mayores de cara al 2023," posted January 17, 2023, by Arturo Lopez Levy, YouTube, 3:05:12, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nRDVClP7-Gw.

University of Havana professor Eduardo Torres Cuevas. As I began to read some José Martí quotes outloud, Sumy responded with his signature phrase, "*sabroso, sabroso*."

We set out on the town to visit some of Sumy's friends. When hunger struck around dinner time, after taking the first packed *camello* bus, Sumy led me into a bakery. I looked at all of the bread and some pieces of cake and I pleaded for us to get "some real food." He laughed at me, telling me I wouldn't survive long in today's Havana. He grabbed two pieces of cake and tossed them into an empty loaf of bread. He handed me the make-shift stuffed gyro and sank his teeth into the other, winking at me: "*Sabroso, sabroso*!"

Rompiendo una Talla en La Habana (Listening and Building in Havana)

Did everyone share Sumy's anti-imperialist fervor and willingness to make personal sacrifices?

I engaged in hundreds of conversations to address this question, in boxing gyms, on street corners, in bars, in hospitals, in work spaces, in living rooms, in parks, on public transportation and walking the streets of Havana. I talked with students, veterans of the anticolonial war in Angola, teachers, stevedores, former prisoners, re*parteros*, emos, hustlers, the Omni Zonafranca artists who went on to build the San Isidro movement,[16] alcoholics, retired carpenters, grandmothers, repatriated Cubans and rockeros.[17] Some conversations took place in private. Other interactions burst out into debates, with friends and family members passionately competing for control of the airwaves.

Havana's population currently stands at 2.4 million, roughly the population of the borough of Queens in New York City. To continue with this comparison, Havana is much larger than Queens geographically. Havana is 281 square miles while Queens is 178 square miles. There are 15 municipalities in Havana. The *municipios* (municipalities) roughly correspond to what we would consider neighborhoods or sections of Queens, such as Astoria, Long Island City, Jackson Heights, Bayside, etc. Armed with curiosity and a thousand questions,

16. While I had no way to prove it in 2001 or 2014, I suspected that these anti-government art collectives were building relationships with regime change actors in the U.S. and Europe. They unsuccessfully tried to recruit me to their pro-U.S. cause.

17. *Reparteros* are the youth of the *repartos* or peripheral neighborhoods of Havana.

my goal was to dedicate time to visiting each of the 15 *municipios* of Havana. Where were people at in terms of their consciousness and enthusiasm about the revolutionary government? What were their chief complaints? What were allegiances? What was the temperature of the revolution among everyday families, political and apolitical, 64 years after the overthrow of the old ruling class? Why are over 200,000 Cubans risking everything to flee the besieged country every year?[18]

"Democracy Promotion" aka Using Hunger as a Weapon to Provoke a Coup

The Trump and Biden administrations and those that preceded them, including that of Barack Obama who only slightly tweaked some stipulations of the blockade, have remained faithful to the original objective of the 1960 blockade.[19] A year after the revolution's triumph, Eisenhower calculated: "If the Cuban people are hungry, they will throw Castro out."[20] Four months later, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Lester D. Mallory agreed: "Every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba...to bring about hunger, desperation and overthrow of the government."

The U.S. government's "Program of Covert Action" drafted in 1960 continues to inform U.S. policy towards Cuba.[21] For six decades, the U.S. has sought to suffocate and destroy Cuba's self-determination. *The Economic War Against Cuba: A Historical and Legal Perspective on the U.S. Blockade* by Salim Lamrani and Fabian Escalante's *Operation Extermination: 50 Years of Aggression against Cuba* are two solid resources about the diverse terrorist tactics employed by the US government.[22]

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18. "Record-breaking numbers of Cuban migrants entered the U.S. in 2022-23," POLITICO, last modified 24, 2023, 07:34 PM (EDT), by Eric Bazail-Eimil, https://www.politico.com/news/2023/10/24/record-breaking-numbers-of-cuban-migrants-entered-the-u-s-in-2022-23-00123346.

19. Danny Shaw, "President Obama's Historic Visit to Cuba: End the 56 year Blockade!," December 20, 2024, posted March 25, 2016, by Professor Danny Shaw, YouTube, 1:25, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87PO-RQePdw.

20. " Hunger as a Weapon: How Biden's Inaction Is Aggravating Cuba's Food Crisis," Common Dreams, posted May 27, 2021, by William M. Leogrande, https://www.commondreams.org/views/2021/05/27/hunger-weapon-how-bidens-inaction-aggravating-cubas-food-crisis.

21. Ada Ferrer,*Cuba: An American History* (Scribner, 2021).

22. Catherine Sunshine, *The Caribbean Survival, Struggle and Sovereignty (*Ecumenical Program,1988),

More than 3,400 Cubans have been killed by U.S. state terrorism since the revolution.[23] U.S. intelligence plotted and organized 638 known attempts on Fidel Castro's life[24]. Biological warfare has been used such as the intentional infection of the island's pig population with the swine virus.[25]

Every policy of today's most powerful empire has been calculated and designed to inflict regime change in Cuba which is an intellectualized euphemism for the complete overhaul of class relations. Ignoring these external pressures, the legacy media hyper focuses on repression in Cuba. Political scientist Michael Parenti explained why socialist countries were forced to employ certain authoritarian measures.[26] Subjected to constant threats, harassment and U.S. intelligence-backed terrorist campaigns, how could the Cuban leadership focus on anything but national security? This defensive posture plays right into the hands of Cuba's would-be colonizers in Washington and Miami. Constantly looking over its shoulder, distrustful and paranoid, brother is pitted against brother.

Amidst the crumbling buildings of Centro Havana, some future leaders of the San Isidro movement exclaimed to me: "los dioses están muertos" (the Gods are dead), meaning that Che, Fidel, Celia Sanchez, Camilo Cienfuegos and the other icons of the revolution meant nothing to young people today. The counterrevolution had its voice and foreign governments and NGO's[27] were

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23. Colomé, Carla Gloria. 2024. "No information about the reported deaths of two Cuban Doctors in Somalia: 'the Outrage Is Overwhelming.' " EL PAÍS English. February 26, 2024. https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-02-26/no-information-about-the-reported-deaths-of-two-cuban-doctors-in-somalia-the-outrage-is-overwhelming.html.

24. "Cuba remembers its children, victims of terrorism," Radio Havana Cuba, last modified August 20, 2022, 07:13:03, by Ed Newman, https://www.radiohc.cu/en/especiales/comentarios/297110-cuba-remembers-its-children-victims-of-terrorism.

25. Charles Arthura and Eligene Noel and Maggie O'Kane,"A Pig's Tale",moderated by Anne Pariso and Leah Gordon,documentary,December 19,2024,posted October 23, 1997,by IMDb,51:00,https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3756250/?ref_=rvi_tt.

26. Twitter, @profdannyshaw Why we must defend socialist states! with @michaelparenti #Cuba #Nicaragua #Venezuela #China #Vietnam #Zimbabwe #Bolivia #northkorea and any other Workers' State" Why we must defend socialists states! with @michaelparenti #Cuba #Nicaragua #Venezuela #China #Vietnam #Zimbabwe #Bolivia #northkorea and any other Workers' Statehttps://x.com/profdannyshaw/status/1611727245562859527

27. "Anti-Government Protests in Cuba Provoked by U.S. Embargo Has Right-Wingers Salivating at the Prospect of Regime Change," CovertAction Magazine, posted August 12, 2021, by Carlos L. Garrido, https://covertactionmagazine.com/2021/08/12/anti-government-protests-in-cuba-provoked-by-u-s-embargo-has-right-wingers-salivating-at-the-prospect-of-regime-change/#post-23306-endnote-5.

willing to pump big money into this “civil society” movement.[28] Tracy Eaton’s The Cuba Money Project meticulously documents the U.S. government’s financing of such groups.[29] The National Endowment for Democracy funded over 40 such counter-revolutionary groups to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars. These “dissidents" assured me they were “non-ideological,” as they organized meetings with the parliament of the European Union alongside U.S.-sponsored pawns, such as Juan Guaido and Luis Almagro. While I always kept them at arm’s length, they were an accurate measure of how many Cubans feel today about the ripped posters and faded murals of the heroes of the revolution. Che’s ideals and Fidel’s bravery were not putting food on the table or ensuring that there was access to electricity or the internet.

Some Cuban journalists and cadres of the party argue that the higher levels of leadership in the party need a wake up call. Some Afro Cuban youth yelled at me: “*Aquí no hay bloqueo*” (there is no blockade here). For too many youth, blaming an economic blockade they could not concretely see had worn thin and no longer seemed like the root cause of their collective woes.

An Ethnography of Terrorism and Resistance

On July 9th, Cuba revealed to the world the latest U.S.-sponsored terrorist plot aimed at fomenting counterrevolution on the island.[30] An armed group calling itself *La Nueva Nación Cubana en Armas* (the New Armed Cuban Nation) stockpiled weapons in Miami and sought to smuggle them into Cuba in order to recruit and activate clandestine cells that would rebel against the government.[31] Though the U.S. media barely mentioned the story, 32 individuals were arrested for conspiring to attack military barracks, schools and hospitals. This was the most recent in six and a half decades of U.S. plots against Cuba. The goal of the New Armed Cuban Nation’s actions were to incite chaos and violence so

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28. Max Blumenthal, “Max Blumenthal exposes Cuba's San Isidro Movement - excerpt from Rokfin exclusive,” December 21, 2024, posted July 29, 2021, by The Grayzone, YouTube, 11:39, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gTXNJ4CyY9g.

29. Tracy Eaton. ”Impact of Cuba Money Project.” Pulitzer Prize Journalism. https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/impact-cuba-money-project

30. “Cuba foils plot to sneak arms onto island from U.S., official says,” NBC NEWS, last modified July 9, 2024, 9:17 AM (EDT), by Reuters, https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/cuba-foils-plot-sneak-arms-from-us-rcna160834.

31. “Evidence of a new terrorist plan against Cuba (+ Video),” Granma, posted July 8, 2024 23:07:19, by Jorge Ernesto Angulo Leiva, https://www.granma.cu/cuba/2024-07-08/evidencias-de-un-nuevo-plan-terrorista-contra-cuba-08-07-2024-23-07-19.

that Elon Musk, CNN and Fox could then spotlight Cuba as a "failed dictatorial state" and justify more aggression against it. Was this a test run for what is to come?

Everyday terrorism that Cuba confronts from the U.S. power structure rarely make the front pages. Denied by apologists for empire and conveniently ignored by Cuba's critics, an unilateral U.S. blockade continues to stifle and starve the people of Cuba. The Special Period, which began in 1991 with the collapse of the Socialist Camp countries led by the Soviet Union, has only intensified over the past three decades, taking its toll, as it is intended to, on the morale of generations of Cubans. On the 66th anniversary of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, has David grown tired of always having to be on the defensive against Goliath, the omnipresent bully? What breathing space[32] do the 11,174,587 people of Cuba have, particularly the 2.3 million youth under the age of 18 years?[33]

88 percent of international currency transactions are[34] still in dollars. There are routine blackout crises[35]. There is no gas. A trip across Havana on public transportation often takes three hours. The U.S. government continues to accuse[36] Cuba of being a hub for Chinese spies and a source of auditory terrorism, or "Havana Syndrome."[37] Protestors fatigued by six and a half decades of a Cold War are demanding "electricity and food."[38] The imperialist Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) forecasts that there will be

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32. "Cuba Population Growth Rate 1950-2024," Macrotrends LLC, December 21, 2024, https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/CUB/cuba/population-growth-rate

33. "Situation of children in Cuba," UNICEF, December 21, 2024, https://www.unicef.org/cuba/en/node/76.

34. "The "mighty" dollar and the Brics countries," Granma, posted December 11, 2024, 10:12:33, by Elson Concepción Pérez, https://en.granma.cu/mundo/2024-12-11/the-mighty-dollar-and-the-brics-countries.

35. "Cuba runs short on fuel at pump as energy crisis festers," Reuters, posted December 13, 20244:58 PM (EST), by Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/cuba-runs-short-fuel-pump-energy-crisis-festers-2024-12-1/

36. "China denies new report linking CCP to four sites in Cuba allegedly used to spy on the US," Fox News, posted December 12, 2024,12:37 pm (EST), by Morgan Phillips, https://www.foxnews.com/politics/china-denies-new-report-linking-ccp-four-sites-cuba-allegedly-used-spy-us.

37. "Chairman Pfluger Opens 'Havana Syndrome' Hearing: "It is Paramount That We Acknowledge the Gravity of the Situation"," Homeland Security Committee | Republican, posted May 8, 2024, https://homeland.house.gov/2024/05/08/chairman-pfluger-opens-havana-syndrome-hearing-it-is-paramount-that-we-acknowledge-the-gravity-of-the-situation/.

38. "The ration book in Cuba leaves an increasingly empty table," The Associated Press, last modified March 24, 2024, 7:59 AM (EST), by ANDREA RODRIGUEZ, https://apnews.com/world-news/general-news-c779220d744e90d7279fb322625258e0.

more protests because of an economy that is worse than during the Special Period.[39] Rations are down to a bare minimum and even that sometimes is not even available.[40] According to one doctor and Cuban Communist Party leader Oldanier: "We live like Palestinians minus the bombing. Malnutrition is everywhere. Inflation has skyrocketed. The state cannot pay our salaries. Child mortality is way up. More and more people are fleeing."

Beyond the Propaganda

Every semester since 2006, until I was fired last semester for denouncing the genocide in Palestine, I asked my City University of New York students in my South American and Caribbean Studies courses: "What do you think of when you hear the word…..Cuba? Write down whatever comes to mind."[41]

It doesn't take a crystal ball to know that many of them wrote: "Cigars, sugarcane, dictator, communism, poor, tourism, baseball, beaches and Fidel." I continued to challenge them: "Have you ever heard one positive word about Cuba? In the media and on social media, have you ever heard anything positive about Cuba and the Cuban system?"

Across the liberal-right divide of American politics, no love is lost for Cuba's leadership. Corporate media outlets show nothing but hostility toward the Cuban system. Social media helps ensure Americans' knee-jerk reactions to Cuba's political system are full of pity and negativity. Anti-communism continues to be the unofficial religion of the United States.

On the opposite end of the political spectrum, anti-imperialist groups organize delegations to Havana to learn about the Cuban system.[42] I was and continue to

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39. "Why Are Latin American Dictators Seeking Membership in BRICS+?," Center for Strategic & International Studies, posted October 28, 2024, by Christopher Hernandez-Roy and Henry Ziemer and Rubi Bledsoe and Ryan C. Berg, https://www.csis.org/analysis/why-are-latin-american-dictators-seeking-membership-brics.

40. "The ration book in Cuba leaves an increasingly empty table," The Associated Press, last modified March 24, 2024, 7:59 AM (EST), by ANDREA RODRIGUEZ, https://apnews.com/world-news/general-news-c779220d744e90d7279fb322625258e0.

41. Danny Shaw, "I'm a professor who got fired and arrested for protesting Israel's Gaza war | Close Up," December 21, 2024, posted May 17, 2024, by Al Jazeera English, YouTube, 8:55, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYdBDl8zxTs.

42. Belly of the Beast (@bellybeastcuba), ""murderous, genocidal inhumane, illegal makes the people feel pain a moral stain on society" …what U.S. youth activists visiting Cuba last month had to say about U.S. policy toward Cuba. Here, in their own words," Twitter (now X), January 6, 2023, https://x.com/bellybeastcuba/status/1611362081663492097.

be a part of them. Often, for understandable reasons, as *brigadistas* we don't have the opportunity to go off the beaten path. Early on during my travels across Cuba, participating in volunteer labor with Cubans and an international brigade on orange plantations in the province of Mayabeque, I became anxious to learn as much as possible about this socialist country. I never once questioned Cuba's right to self-determination free of U.S. government interference. As the Palestinians say, "existence is resistance." Still, I wondered: what are the experiences and critiques of those who live this reality and bear its consequences? Ignoring the rough edges of life in Cuba does not make them go away. Ignorance of them only disarms us as we seek to engage the diaspora, end the economic war and clearly scrutinize the next foreign attempt at a color revolution.

Visa para Un Sueño (A Visa for a Dream)[43]

On January 4, 2023 the U.S. embassy reopened its visa operations in Havana.[44] This was the first time the U.S. embassy had begun providing consular services since the wild, unproven[45] accusations that the Cubans were using sonic terrorism against embassy officials in 2017.[46] Those allegations came at a strategic time and were designed to interrupt the first potential thawing of relations between the two countries since 1958. Over 200,000 Cubans have been forced to leave their homeland in the past year and a half, a figure even larger than previous migrations such as the Marielitos and the 1994 "rafters."[47] While the mainstream media repeated the announcement of the reopening embassy and the alarming migration statistics, no outlet thought to examine

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43. Dominican national merengue singer, song writer and icon, Juan Luis Guerra's song about the only hope most Dominican families ever had, a visa to Uptown, New York City. It means a "Visa to Pursue a Dream." Moderated by EMI Music Netherlands BV, December 19,2014, posted May 10,2013, by Juan Luis Guerra.YouTube, 3:24. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=py5lONtuw2A.

44. "The U.S. is reopening visa and consular services at embassy in Cuba," npr, posted January 4, 2023, 1:09 AM (ET), The Associated Press, https://www.npr.org/2023/01/04/1146863107/the-u-s-is-reopening-visa-and-consular-services-at-embassy-in-cuba.

45. "Fidel Castro - What Trump and the haters he encourages ignore," Granma, posted May 7, 2020, 10:05:24, by Iroel Sánchez , https://en.granma.cu/cuba/2020-05-07/fidel-castro-what-trump-and-the-haters-he-encourages-ignore.

46. "US diplomats, families in Cuba targeted nearly 50 times by sonic attacks, says US official," CNN Politics, last modified September 23, 2017, 4:36 PM (EDT), by Elise Labott and Patrick Oppmann, https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/23/politics/cuba-sonic-attack/index.html.

47. "Menendez clings to damaging embargo on Cuba | Editorial," NJ.com, posted January 9, 2023, 7:30 a.m, https://www.nj.com/opinion/2023/01/menendez-clings-to-damaging-embargo-on-cuba-editorial.html.

why hundreds of thousands of Cubans from the last two generations have been forced to leave their homeland.

A Track Record of Revolution, Solidarity and Internationalism

Sumy's parents' generation made the revolution. Sumy's generation benefited from the social transformation and fortified it.

The Cuban revolution represented a great unleashing of human energies and potential, much like the Chinese Revolution which was set in motion during the Long March of the 1930s. As Dr. Ana Ferrer's Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Cuba: An American History* demonstrates, this was a society in ferment: Cubans of all ages questioned orthodoxy, overthrew the old and reorganized. The conscious workers and peasants smashed the old repressive state apparatus. The new ruling class, with its roots in the humble sections of Cuba, combatted colonial-era dependency on the sugar mono-crop.[48] Massive literacy campaigns swept the countryside and the new Cuban leadership eliminated hunger. Health indicators began to resemble not those of downtrodden colonies but those of their well-heeled colonizer states. Radical agrarian reforms freed up land for hundreds of thousands of toiling families. Housing, transportation and health care became rights protected by the state. Cuba stood up and declared before the world — as the 1804 Haitian revolution had before it — "Never again shall a foreigner step foot on this soil as a master of our destiny."[49]

Cuba inspired billions of workers and peasants across Latin American and the world to rise up and overthrow the legacy of colonial underdevelopment. Half a million Cuban volunteers fought in Africa, the Middle East and South America shoulder to shoulder with the 'Wretched of the Earth,' in pursuit of Fanon's baptism.[50] Regardless of future events, the Cuban Revolution has forever proven that 'Yes, it can be done!' The despised, the silenced, the spat upon and

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48. "Anti-Government Protests in Cuba Provoked by U.S. Embargo Has Right-Wingers Salivating at the Prospect of Regime Change," CovertAction Magazine, posted August 12, 2021, by Carlos L. Garrido, https://covertactionmagazine.com/2021/08/12/anti-government-protests-in-cuba-provoked-by-u-s-embargo-has-right-wingers-salivating-at-the-prospect-of-regime-change/,

49. Proclamation by Jean Jack Dessalines enshrined in the 1804 Haitian constitution.

50. *Cuba: An African Odyssey* for more on Cuba's role in the liberation of Angola, Guine Bissau and beyond. Lowell Denny,"Cuba An African Odyssey [Parts I and II]",moderated by BBC production, December 19,2024, posted November 5,2019, by Lowell. Denny. YouTube,1:57:34. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztqxOmDBjXk.

humiliated can rise up, reclaim and rewrite history. Never again can we be told that the reorganization of society is idealism and a pie in the sky at best. Despite all of the misinformation and demonization of Cuba, this can never be taken away. Cuba and the fact that it still stands on its own two dignified feet, is an ideological weapon of freedom in the closet of ammunition of those who fight for humanity.

My time in Haiti provided concrete proof of Cuban internationalism at work.

In the countryside of Haiti, besides Mormons completing their proselytizing requirements, what foreigners walk the unpenetrated mountains and overflowing shantytowns?

Deeper in the mountains, Cuban doctors treat and heal the Haitian people.[51] As readily as you can see Mormons and other colonial-style missionaries strutting in twos throughout the ghettos and villages of oppressed countries, Cuban doctors spread across the globe offering their humble services to humanity. Cuba offered doctors to New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina before the U.S. government did.[52] No other country has had such a consistent commitment to internationalism, earning Cuba a Nobel Peace Prize nomination for their efforts to help countries confront the COVID-19 epidemic. According to one estimate, Cuban doctors have treated close to 2 billion human beings since the revolution.[53]

Youth: The #1 Casualty of the Blockade

While Sumy and many from his generation are firm supporters of the revolution, the two generations that followed are less committed and ideologically stealed. A similar dynamic took place in the Soviet Union. The generation of 1917 fought the revolution and hundreds of thousands died in the 1917-1922 Civil War. The generation of WWII defeated the Nazis. 27,000,000 Soviets gave

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51. Mountains beyond Mountains is a Haitian proverb "Deyè monn gen monn," meaning the struggle never ceases. It is also the title of Tracy Kidder's biography of Dr. Paul Farmer.

52. 'Bush Administration Refuses Cuban Offer of Medical Assistance Following Katrina," FPIF, posted October 19, 2005, by John Gershman, Stephen Zunes, https://fpif.org/bush_administration_refuses_cuban_offer_of_medical_assistance_following_katrina/.

53. "No information about the reported deaths of two Cuban doctors in Somalia: 'The outrage is overwhelming'," EL PAÍS, posted February 26, 2024, 10:56 (EST), by Carla Gloria Colomé, https://english.elpais.com/international/2024-02-26/no-information-about-the-reported-deaths-of-two-cuban-doctors-in-somalia-the-outrage-is-overwhelming.html.

their lives to defeat Hitler's extermination campaign. But by the 1970's, as Carlos Martinez writes in *The End of the Beginning: Lessons of the Soviet Collapse*, a sense of demoralization had set in among certain sectors of the Soviet population that was ultimately a factor in the restoration of capitalism.[54]

How many Cuban youth feel de-futurized today? How many teenagers and young adults pledge that they will not die in Cuba? It was as if they were taking an oath before the moon to cross the seas by any means necessary. At a Metallica-blaring nightclub, four Cuban rock-a-billies screamed to explain to me that their government "*son unos sing**s* (pieces of sh^t)."

The exasperation and determination is visceral.

A pack of hungry young men descended upon another group of teens in street clashes that were previously foreign to the backstreets of Centro Habana and La Habana Vieja. President Diaz Canel's administration feels the urgency. Earlier this year, for the first time they asked the United Nations for food support.[55]

When I defended the system with all of my reading and ideological training, I was the one who was sometimes laughed at and mocked. A young Rasta woman kicked me out of her apartment in front of her spliff-smoking crew, accusing me of working with the Cuban government to infiltrate her "non-ideological" Rasta subculture. Two doctors cracked up laughing, remarking sarcastically, "*Oh, este es un comunistón.*"[56] Family members would stop mid sentence completely perplexed by my accent and about my motives, wondering if I was some type of informant. Time and time again, I heard, "Oh you like socialism? Let's trade places."[57] Many youth of all skin tones asked me why I got to travel where I wanted to but they could not. Others cited the

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54. Carlos Martinez. *The End of the Beginning: Lessons of the Soviet Collapse* Left Word Books: 2019.

55. "Cuba asks UN for help as food shortages worsen," BBC, posted February 29, 2024, by Vanessa Buschschlüter, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-68434845.

56. "Oh look at the big bad real communist."

57. My individual experience in Havana is clearly colored and shaped by the fact that I am a white American male. My money is worth much more than the devalued Cuban currency and my blue passport ensures that I come and go at any time. I wonder how my experience might have been different if I were Black or from another South American country. One friend Rafaelito declared: "Coño I don't care if you're *chino* or *ecuatoriano*, I just need to get the hell out of here." Acquaintances and strangers asked me to marry a cousin or an aunt to help the family out. My identity as a white American opened up some doors and kept others shut. My command of Spanish and Cuban slang was an ice-breaker when Cubans first thought I was a European tourist. In some areas frequented by Europeans, no matter how well I articulate myself in Spanish, some Cubans continue to relate to me as though I could not understand a word of the language, playing charades with me. For them I was a *punto* (a tourist who can easily be

national poet Nicolás Guillen: ”Cuba es dulce por fuera, pero muy amarga por adentro,” (“Cuba is sweet on the outside, but very bitter on the inside”), insinuating that it was easy to love Cuba from afar but much more difficult to endure her inner reality on a daily basis.

There was no tale of the everyday struggles from the Bronx, New York or Opa Locka, Miami that could discourage them from wanting to migrate. Before a portrait of the exploitation and the accompanying human misery that exists in neo-colonies like El Salvador, Guatemala, or Colombia, Chano — a Yoruba *padrino* (godfather) — responded: “I can only hope the *yumas* (gringos) come and recolonize us.[58] Then I can be exploited all day in their sweatshops and at least earn 10 bucks that are worth something.” This is the material reality of scarcity imposed from without that has been the chief catalyst of Cuban’s frustrations and hopelessness.

It is useful to remember: “People make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please…but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past.”[59] The Cuban leadership continually points to the international economic pressure to explain the despair. The harsh reality, however, is that there is no explaining away “war communism.”[60] Until there are revolutionary breakthroughs elsewhere and a truly multipolar world, Cubans will be confined[61] to an existence of scarcity or what the

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hustled). Others — deep into a conversation — stopped mid-sentence during their responses, asking me if I was *un periodista infiltrado* (an undercover journalist), collecting information for the government. Several Cubans accused the state of employing foreign spies and told others to be careful with their responses. Confidants made me promise not to divulge their responses to sensitive questions. Other families lost in both the revelry and polemic shouted out every last insult against their government. Some people shared family member’s sea-odysseys to Miami openly on the bus. This contrasted sharply with one friend Juan who became offended by my privately prodding into the opportunities to take *balsas* (rafts or boats) to Florida. He yelled at me, “Mira gringo while you continue to enjoy yourself prancing around Cuba, I will be locked up in El Combinado del Este (Havana’s largest jail) just for talking to you about this.” He didn’t want to field a question that could raise the suspicions of those around him. Hundreds of pages of notes dating back to 1995 capture these illuminating anecdotes.

58. Gringos or Americans. The word *Yuma* comes from the Clint Walker 1971 Western movie by this title.

59. Karl Marx. The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonapart, 1852.

60. The Bolsheviks describe the extreme rationing methods and centralization of production during the 1917-1922 Russian Civil War as “war communism.” Vladimir Lenin described the desperate struggle for survival of the fledgling Soviet worker’s state when it was surrounded and under attack by the tsarist white army and 14 different imperialist armies. Hundreds of thousands of Bolsheviks and Red Army soldiers died in defense of their revolution.

61. Gabriel Rockhill, “Understanding Siege Socialism with Gabriel Rockhill,” December 21, 2024, posted July 9, 2024, by Critical Theory Workshop, YouTube, 1:02:35, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9NlaRTu9wdk.

highly-censored Parenti called “Siege Socialism.”[62] In the words of one mother and communist militant in Marianao: “The new generation has only lived in a period of sacrifice and more sacrifice. They don't remember the struggle against Batista nor the first decade of the revolution, with those marvelous debates and experiments we had at that time. They only know austerity.”

The Cuban Communist Party (PCC): Doing the Impossible

The Cuban leadership, seasoned by six decades of successful resistance and growth, is searching for a response to the hybrid war and its impact on morale. They respond as any fighter who is fighting above their weight does, aggressively and desperately. Multipolarity is their strategy to break the blockade.

President Diaz-Canel visited Iran to discuss mutually-beneficial ways to break the embargoes.[63] The Deputy President Salvador Valdés Mesa recently returned from a visit to South Africa to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties.[64] On May 9th, which was the 79th anniversary of the Soviet Day of Victory over Fascism, arguably the most important holiday the world has, the Cuban president celebrated with Vladimir Putin in the Grand Kremlin Palace. Cuba hosted a fleet of Russian warships in its harbors, just 500 miles from nuclear-powered U.S. attack submarines which continue to occupy Guantanamo Bay.[65]

Visits back and forth between Xi Jinping and his Cuban counterpart shows Cuba’s resolve to build up their own Chinese style competitive state companies that operate internationally and seek to find a cure for the food shortages. Cuba

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62. “A Communist Review of Michael Parenti’s Blackshirts and Reds,” Revolutionary Communists America, posted November 9, 2023, by Max Halpern, https://communistusa.org/a-communist-review-of-michael-parentis-blackshirts-and-reds/.

63. Torres, Nora Gámez. 2023. “Cuba leader meets Iran’s Supreme Leader, opens up the Island to Iranian Investors.” Miami Herald. December 7, 2023. https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article282756793.html.

64. Cuba’s Representative Office Abroad. 2024. “Cuban Deputy President Concludes Fruitful Visit to South Africa.” CUBADIPLOMATICA. June 20, 2024. https://misiones.cubaminrex.cu/en/articulo/cuban-deputy-president-concludes-fruitful-visit-south-africa.

65. Oppmann, Patrick. 2024. “On Board the Russian Warship Visiting Cuba.” CNN. June 15, 2024. https://edition.cnn.com/2024/06/14/americas/onboard-the-russian-warship-visiting-cuba/index.html.

hosted the Group of 77 last year, the largest international organization after the United Nations itself.[66] 134 countries, or 80 percent of the world population, are currently represented in the now misnamed "Group of 77." From Havana, chairman of the Group of 77, Diaz-Canel, insisted: "After all this time that the North has organized the world according to its interests, it is now up to the South to change the rules of the game."[67] Cuba, along with 34 other countries, has applied for membership in BRICS. The addition of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, the United Arab Emirates, Iran and Argentina (contested by the new president Milei) at the beginning of 2024, means the BRICS bloc nations now constitute 42% of the world's population and account for 23% of gross domestic product and 18% of global trade.[68] Cuba's future does not run through Wall Street or the Beltway, it runs through Moscow, Beijing, Caracas, Tehran, Johannesburg and the other burgeoning centers of multipolarity.

Cuba is no longer an isolated moral compass standing on its own like it was in 1991. It is now a small but barrelling wave in the rising tide of multipolarity.

Since January 1st, 1959, Cuba has stood up to "economic terrorism" from the United States and Western European countries, "which affects a third of humanity with more than 8,000 specific sanctions in 39 countries."[69] There is a reason Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez were not just the most popular leaders in their homelands, they were the most popular leaders throughout the Global South. Last month, on June 20th, South Africa commemorated the 2,000 Cuban soldiers who gave their lives to Africa's liberation wars in the 1960's, '70's and '80's.[70] Wherever there is a Goliath, Cuba recognizes David.

Washington lives in panic. Last year, 12 South American heads of state gathered in Brasilia to reignite La Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (UNASUR).[71] This is the second iteration of the Pink Tide, on the 201st

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66. Kate Whiting. *World Economic Forum*. "What is the G77 and why does it matter?" Sep 29, 2023.

67. Kate Whiting. "What is the G77 and why does it matter?". *World Economic Forum.* Sep 29, 2023. https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/09/g77-intergovernmental-developing-countries/

68. 14ymedio. "The BRICS Admit Six New Countries but Reject 34, Including Cuba". *Translating Cuba*. August 24, 2023. https://translatingcuba.com/the-brics-admit-six-new-countries-but-reject-34-including-cuba/

69. Sara Flounders. "U.S. war on the defenseless / Sanctions harm one-third of world's people". *Mundo Obrero Workers World*. December 3, 2019. https://www.workers.org/2019/12/44711/

70. Cuban Mission Abroad. "Cuban Deputy President concludes fruitful visit to South Africa." 20 June 2024.

71. Rafael Pérez. "Cumbre sudamericana: ¿qué se espera del encuentro que busca impulsar la integración regional?". *France24*. may 30/2023. https://www.france24.com/es/am%C3%A9rica

anniversary of the Monroe Doctrine, building greater economic, political, diplomatic and military integration and unity among the nations of the Caribbean and South America. These multipolar regional and global developments could not occur soon enough for Cuba and Venezuela, the two nations most impacted by Washington's unilateral economic wars. Despite the red-baiting and Cold War 2.0 rhetoric against Caracas and Havana, the peoples of the continent are finally interrupting Washington's domination of a hemisphere they have long treated as their backyard.

One of Cuba's biggest enemies, incoming Secretary of State Marco Rubio, has warned of the multipolar world on the horizon.[72] Alarmed by Brazilian President Lula's multipolar instincts and his visits to Beijing and beyond, the right-wing Florida senator appeared anxious on Fox News: "We won't have to talk about sanctions in five years because there'll be so many countries transacting in currencies other than the dollar that we won't have the ability to sanction them." Could the "sanction inability" theory, as the Chinese *Global Times* calls it, spell relief for the Cuban people or is it too late?

The economist, theorist and writer Ernesto "Che" Guevara wrote "Be realistic, demand the impossible!" This slogan captures the mentality of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla and other *dirigentes* (leaders). Cuban local and national leadership has found a way to endure the mightiest of hurricanes, U.S. imperialism. The scorn they inspire in the stenographers of the Miami Herald as well as the lies from the Trumps and Bidens is the surest proof that Cuba continues to inspire the underdogs of the world.

The Special Period Never Ended

Unfortunately for Cubans, you cannot yet feed your children nor fuel your cars with multipolarity. Capitalism demands instant gratification. And capitalism knows how to prey upon the alienation and impetuosity of youth.

The verb *luchar* captures a shift in this generation's mindset. It has multiple meanings mostly associated with struggle and its historic use contrasts with

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-latina/20230530-cumbre-sudamericana-qu%C3%A9-se-espera-del-encuentro-que-busca-impulsar-la-integraci%C3%B3n-regional

72. Hu Weijia. " Rubio's 'Sanction Inability' Theory Rings Funeral Bell for US dollar hegemony." *Global Times*. Apr 05, 2023 . https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202304/1288566.shtml

where the national liberation struggle is at today. *Luchar* today in street slang means "to hustle, to get by, to survive." *Luchar* embodies the everyday struggle in Havana to push ahead as one can, inventing whatever hustle to gain access to dollars or euros. This is in sharp contrast to the parents of the hustlers and survivors who learned to have a revolutionary outlook of self-sacrifice and to maintain a fighting optimism. Early in the revolution, a strong economic base produced an inspiring infrastructure – cinema, billboards, art, murals, national demonstrations, olympic gold medalists, etc.[73] The long lines, unmotivated workers and dilapidated state of the world famous ice cream parlor Coppelia, whose construction was overseen by the guerrilla Celia Sanchez, mocked the booming success of the Castro establishment from decades past.[74] Too many mothers commiserate with one another that they long for the years when Cubans could do more than survive, they could live.

The special period began at the end of 1990 when Cuba's economy was brought to a virtual standstill with the fall of the Socialist camp. Only 12 to 15 percent of industrial capacity still functioned. Foreign trade fell by 70 percent.[75] This staggering loss of productive capacity was Cuba's very own Great Depression. While there were partial recoveries and adjustments of the economy, the hard times continued. The National Library of Medicine characterized the period as a famine, documenting how Cubans on average lost an average of 5 to 20 percent of their body weight.[76] Sumy and his contemporaries saw all of this as the next wave of attempts to overthrow the revolution. The indomitable generation kept their hands up, heads down, bobbing and weaving through every U.S. attempt at sabotage, punching forward with an enormous spirit of self-sacrifice. All of humanity is indebted to them for holding the banner of socialism and resistance high in the most difficult moments. Due to the drastically different material and geopolitical reality, how can this generation shoulder such a historic responsibility with equal enthusiasm? Many want out.

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73. Danny Shaw. "Teófilo Stevenson: The most humble of champions". *Liberation*. June 15, 2012. https://www.liberationnews.org/tefilo-stevenson-the-most-html/

74. Iker Morán. "Coppelia, cuando Fidel construyó en La Habana la mejor heladería del mundo". *La Vanguardia*. Nov 29/2016 . https://www.lavanguardia.com/comer/sitios/20161129/412234247802/coppelia-fidel-castro-mejor-heladeria-mundo-la-habana.html

75. Jorge Mario Sánchez Egozcue and Juan Triana Cordoví. "An Overview of the Cuban Economy, the Transformations Underway and the Prospective Challenges it Faces". *Real Instituto Elcano Royal Institute*. 03 Nov 2008. https://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/en/work-document/an-overview-of-the-cuban-economy-the-transformations-underway-and-the-prospective-challenges-it-faces-wp/

76. Canadian Medical Association. "Health consequences of Cuba's Special Period." CMAJ 179, no. 3 (2008): 257-257. https://doi.org/10.1503/cmaj.1080068

They say that they never signed up for this. They provide the fertile soil for the next San Isidro-like color revolution attempt.

Any contact with a foreigner from a rich country meant potential access to consumer goods and foreign money worth 20 to 150 times the local currency. Plato must have been writing about the Cuban people when he said "necessity is the mother of invention." Havana is home to every hustle imaginable to survive the realities of an enclosed world. At the same time, these dynamics of inequality encompass a neo-dependency on foreigners.

Cubans call sex work or prostitution, *jineterismo*. A *jinete* is a jockey. *Jineterismo*, literally translated, is the art of riding the horse. The horse is the foreigner. The *jineteras* are concentrated in the tourist districts of Centro Habana, Vieja Habana, El Vedado and Playa. There was none of this activity, in what would be called the outer boroughs in New York City, because there were no tourists visiting those areas. In the periphery of Havana, there are few non-Cubans. A *jinetera* may live in Guanabacoa or La Lisa, which is a half hour bus ride from Central Havana, but they made the daily trek from their neighborhood to *jinetiar* downtown where the money is. One grandmother whose 25-year-old grandson working informally as a *jinete* shrugged her shoulders and said: "We have to live somehow." A neighborhood colleague chimed in: "This is a job like any job. Here we respect the *jineteros*. It is normal. We do what we have to." A Cuban philosopher took a deep breath and remarked: "*El jineterismo* is a stark reality that we don't like talking about. But it's true and rooted in the blockade."

Alexis is a poet and teacher from Alamar who lived with his wife and children. He met an American woman who came with an international delegation and dated her. He periodically left his home for a week or two at a time to "work" with this American woman. His wife was aware of his actions and seemingly understood that it was necessary. The blockade challenges everything from the traditional Cuban family structure to notions of sexuality. Alexis' wife Maria understood that he was going out with and sleeping with another woman in hopes that he could travel and perhaps one day send for her and the children to join him. Maria responded with a certain sense of dejection and resignation. As the *cristales* (popular Cuban beer) poured themselves, I asked curiously between laughs and sighs what these types of sacrifices meant for her. She responded: *"Hacer que, mi hijo?"* (What else can we do, my son?) Within these one-on-one conversations or exchanges with a group of a dozen people just hanging out on a porch, there were other Cuban women who declared,

"F*ck that. There are other ways to struggle forward without opening your legs to a foreigner." As anyone who has spent a significant amount of time in Havana knows, these debates often spilled over into community discussions and polemics where no one was too shy to offer their two cents.

For some Habaneros who are *luchando*, any tourist is a "*punto*." This is slang for "a target" or a point of attraction because of the access they represent. Several Cubans married representatives from solidarity groups While one participant in the marriage naively embraced it as a bond never to be broken, the Cuban participant often "hustled" to find their way out to achieve economic opportunities elsewhere that would enable them to send money back to their family. Clearly, not every marriage between a Cuban and a foreigner was built upon an economic necessity, but there were enough to make note of this practice. Other Cubans hustle in the tourist economy in order to consume the latest fashions and cellular telephones. Some youth sought hard cash to survive, others to look good and consume like their first-world counterparts. Youth leaders in the *Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas* (UJC, Union of Young Communists) expressed concern over the explosion of materialism among their youth counterparts. They swore up and down, shadowboxing in the "Memories of Underdevelopment," that Fidel would have confronted this humiliation head on and somehow magically whisked it away.[77]

One artist shared this quip to make his point about the disconnect between the PCC (the Cuban Communist Party) and this generation of youth: "They asked a young girl in my neighborhood, Habana del Este, what she wants to be when she grows up. She responded: "a *yuma*, meaning a foreigner."

Some of the artists and cultural activists I went to poetry and hip hop shows with in 2001 went on to form the leadership of the San Isidro movement. Like the *damas blancas* "movement" (the women dressed in white) and MSNBC's perennial "Cuban political prisoners," the 2021 San Isidro protests became the darlings of both the Republican and Democratic wings of the U.S. media establishment. These talented poets and hip hop artists had contacts with think tanks and NGO's who were able to provide them with money, prominent social media attention and a prized possession in Cuba, visas. I visited the Omni Zonafranca artists in D.C. and New Orleans in 2012 when they were on tour, hosted by different U.S. academics and NGOs.[78] Charming, intelligent and

77. Alea, Tomás Gutiérrez . 2019. "Memories of underdevelopment." The criterion collection. 2019.
https://www.criterion.com/films/29220-memories-of-underdevelopment.
78. El Yuma. 2020. "El Yuma." Blogspot.com. 2020. https://elyuma.blogspot.com/.

captivating, it was tough not to fall in love with these artists, who always claimed to be "non-ideological." One couple exclaimed that they had started "Occupy Cuba" in order to take buildings back from the government. This was an interesting idea in a country where 85 percent of people own their own homes.[79] Afro-Cuban youth and cultural workers are the perfect weapon for intersectional imperialism and its aim of regime change.[80]

A City without Ghettos

As any Cuban will tell you, "*esto está complicado*" (This is complicated). The economic situation is dire. Long lines and packed public buses characterize the public transportation experience. Havana's roofs and ceilings are caving in. Infrastructure is crumbling.

Poverty is different in Havana because it does not stand in stark contrast to great wealth. Locals often warned me: *"Oh no. Don't head that way!" "Stay away from there! That is a rough area. You'd have to be crazy to go there."* One elderly woman told me *"No, don't go to Alamar. There are some real elementos over there."*[81] Other contacts laughed *"No te metes alli en Lumumba (Arroyo Naranjo) que estos negros te van a volar encima."*[82] As I kept walking, never was there anything dramatically different from the fear-mongers' own neighborhoods. In fact, I often stumbled upon new friends who offered equally dire warnings about the neighborhoods I had just come from.

There is some social differentiation but it is fantastically less than in a capitalist country. Inequality has risen since the initiation of market reforms in 2010. The blockade and opening up to tourism introduced economic contradictions that are now part and parcel of the Cuban reality. Some small businesses have had great success, resulting in new class contradictions that did not exist prior to 1991. Families with loved ones in Miami had a better chance at capitalizing on these economic opportunities; millions of others were left to fend for themselves.

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79. Mesa-Lago, Carmelo. 2019. "Housing in Socialist Cuba and the Structural Reforms | Cuba Capacity Building Project." Horizontecubano.law.columbia.edu. November 28, 2019. https://horizontecubano.law.columbia.edu/news/housing-socialist-cuba-and-structural-reforms.

80. Cuba, Ratb . 2021. "Max Blumenthal - the social media war on Cuba." YouTube. September 14, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uGINhPv8ZZY.

81. Elementos could be translated here as shady or suspicious people and veiled language implying there were dark-skinned Cubans who lived there.

82. "Don't go to the neighborhood of Lumumba. Those Black people there will jump you."

There is no homelessness as we know it in the West and housing is a human right guaranteed by the constitution. One might find a mentally ill person or an alcoholic wandering the streets in a very bad place. These are isolated cases and there is support for them. La Fundación Fernando Ortiz published an ethnographic study that explains their findings on this topic.[83] There is no such thing as a child begging or roaming the city barefoot and hungry. I contrasted this with my experiences living in Rio de Janeiro, Port-au-Prince, Praia and Santo Domingo, among other cities in the formerly colonized world, where I saw extreme misery and humiliation. Havana is something quite different and even shocking to those who have never visited.

There are substandard housing structures called "*los llega y pon*" (the "arrive and puts"), in reference to the makeshift shacks that internal migrants build when they arrive in the capital. They are in the outskirts of Marianao, San Miguel de Padrón and other municipalities. Built from cardboard, wood, palm leaves and zinc, these structures are temporary living quarters for families from the interior of Cuba where the material scarcity is more intense than in Havana. Over the course of decades, hundreds of thousands of families saved up money to try to move to the big city. According to one resident of Marianao, "trying to build a sustainable house has been an odyssey for us."

Every street is a paved street. It is only here in the back alleys where the *Palestinos* live that you find the famed *callejones* (alleyways) so feared in the Global South. *Palestinos* is everyday slang for people who migrate to Havana from the Oriental provinces. Like the Palestinian people, they search for survival in a land that is no longer their own. But the reality of the internal migrants is clearly not as intense as that of the indigenous people of the Middle East who continue to fight for their right to exist in their own land.

As Western newspapers love to showcase, the deterioration of homes is a major problem in Havana Vieja and Centro Havana. Ceilings and walls often collapse. Communities don't have access to concrete and the building materials needed to upgrade their homes. Children innocently play in the streets, seemingly unaware of a certain grayness or demoralization that has taken root in those old enough to understand the tedious matters of infrastructure. Pickpocketing and other petty crimes in Centro Habana and on the buses has become more of an issue. Talking or texting on your cellphone at the wrong moment in the wrong place can result in petty theft.

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83. Fundación Fernando Ortiz. *Cuba Etnográfica*. Havana. 2012.

A Tale of Two Cities

While Havana has no slums as we would define them in the U.S., the hotels and private neighborhoods clearly represent a different world. The tourist economy is a central part of Havana's reality. Habana Libre hotel, Hotel Nacional and a host of other hotels that dot the *malecon* (the ocean front) are the tallest and newest buildings in Havana.[84] A night at one of these hotels costs anywhere from $300 to $1,000 dollars for the fanciest VIP suite.[85] The official government exchange rate is 25.75 pesos per dollar.[86] If a Cuban worker earns tips or any income in dollars, they often post in a WhatsApp chat group to see if anyone can exchange it for them for pesos.

The Soviet Union and Cuba exchanged oil for sugar. The number one oil-producing country in the world at the time did something unthinkable under capitalist trade relations – they engaged in the barter system. Today there are gas shortages. Nostalgic but still pushing forward, the Cubans tried turning to a new source of income.[87]

With the fall of king sugar, the PCC saw tourism as the new cash crop. The tourist industry was on the march in the 1990s and into the new millennium, peaking in 2018 with 4,712,000 visitors. Then the pandemic happened. The bottom fell out of Cuba's largest industry, precipitously dropping to 1,086,000 visitors in 2020.[88] This was the perfect recipe for economic disaster and hunger. Fewer tourists meant fewer dollars and euros. In a world of dollar and euro

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84. I could tap into my national and skin privilege in the small tourist enclaves. I breached hotel security if I pretended not to speak Spanish. Who dared question whether or not I belonged there? When I was accompanied by Cuban friends, we did not even make it past the elevator without a suited security guard asking for our hotel keys as proof that we were staying there. No Cuban liked this reality. All of society was bearing the sacrifice together.

85. Up until the pandemic, there were two currencies in Cuba. The CUC was the Cuban equivalent of the dollar. $100 US dollars fetched $85 C.U.C., the convertible Cuban peso. Cubans "illegally" exchanged money on the black market, where one hundred U.S. dollars was exchanged for $90 C.U.C. The everyday people's money, the Cuban peso, had very little value. $1 dollar was worth 175 pesos. This mean only access to foreign currency allowed one to buy most consumer products at special CUC stores. Cuba eliminated the two currency system during the pandemic.

86. Guagenti, Calogero. 2023. "USD to CUP: Convert United States Dollar to Cuban Peso." Forbes Advisor. December 13, 2023. https://www.forbes.com/advisor/money-transfer/currency-converter/usd-cup/?amount=1.

87. World Tourism Organization. 2024. "International Tourism, Number of Arrivals - Cuba | Data." Data.worldbank.org. 2024. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?locations=CU.

88. World Tourism Organization. 2024. "International Tourism, Number of Arrivals - Cuba | Data." Data.worldbank.org. 2024. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/ST.INT.ARVL?locations=CU.

supremacy, Cuba cannot use its peso to buy food, medicine, machinery, spare parts or imports on the international market. Can the Cuban government be blamed for this monetary war? Similar to the lively debates around the sugar mono-crop economy in the 1970's, there was a discourse that putting all the eggs within the basket of the tourist economy was unsustainable.

A cashier or waitress earns roughly 3,000 pesos monthly, or $15 U.S. dollars. The Cuban people earn in a currency that has very little value when compared to the dollar. This is the fiscal reality that forces a doctor or an Angolan Liberation War veteran to moonlight as a taxi driver. A doctor can potentially earn her monthly salary driving one night for tourists.

The manipulation of a people's currency is as much a psychological as an economic weapon of war.

Yoselin is a 53-year-old nurse whose children are grown. Her husband passed away from a stroke and she cares for her mother. She earns 6,000 pesos ($17.14) per month working Monday through Friday from 8 A.M. until 6 P.M. Beyond the subsidized food she receives, she has a series of economic decisions to make. A pair of shoes costs more than a month's salary, somewhere between 5000 and 20,000 pesos. A pocketbook costs 3000 to 5000 pesos. Yoselin clarified that these are not brand name products. I asked her about name brands. "No. We can't. Those are beyond our reach." She continued outlining the cost of everyday items. Jeans, 3000. A dress, 4000. Hair dye, 800. Shampoo, 800. Hair conditioner, 800. Perfume or cologne costs 4000 pesos, or 10 times more expensive if it is a fancy brand. Deodorant is 500 pesos or roughly two or three days of work. Fish is 500 to 600 pesos per pound. These items have long been luxuries in Cuba.

As Yoselín explained and re-explained all of this to me I got dizzy. She chuckled: "You think you're dizzy? Imagine us, living this situation day after day, year after year. What about my patients? We medical workers have to be artists to get them enough food to heal. There is no medicine or syringes. We get two pens per month. They [the U.S. government] are asphyxiating us!" She showed me her refrigerator and an old computer she had been saving up for years to fix. She then asked me rhetorically: "Why do you think we love Russia? We can eat bread and pizza thanks to Putin. We'd be starving if it wasn't for Russia. Russia has sent 6 million rubles worth of wheat to Cuba."

The Russian government sent 20,000 tons of wheat to Cuba in April of 2023. Russia postponed all Cuban debts until 2027.[89]

While Cuba attracts a unique brand of leftist tourists several times a year, who arrive in solidarity with the revolution, a high percentage of tourists are of the traditional sort. Most Europeans and Canadians have no interest in how Cuban people live. To them, Havana may as well be Cancún or Aruba. They come for the everyday clichés described in the tourist's brochures: rum, beaches, tobacco, entertainment and exotic Cubans.

While recognizing the social benefits the revolution had established, many workers — alluding to the tourist scene — see no difference from the struggles of their family members before the revolution. The inequality is in their face. They express that the humiliation and dependency is the same. The foreigner enjoys the Cuba that Cubans cannot. The nightlife around these hotels and at the famous resorts of the Varadero Beach — an hour and a half outside of Havana — reflect the old colonial dynamic. Cubans — half-clad and "exoticized" — put together elaborate shows and dance for the enjoyment of the *yumas* who sipp their cocktails. This form of tourism reflects a neo-colony relationship. Many Habanaeros feel trapped and resentful as they navigate dependency, love and hate before tourists and their coveted dollars and euros.

The elected leadership understands the duality of the tourist industry in that it brings in much-needed dollars and euros but also brings with it a host of social ills. The profits derived from the hotels are poured back into the economy in the form of medicine, hospitals, transportation and whatever else the population needs. Cubans see tourism as a retreat, but a necessary one to adapt and survive in a hostile capitalist-dominated world.

Cuban state companies work with European capital to fetch foreign currency, especially through tourism. The Cuban leadership, unlike the post-Mao Chinese leadership, has not fully embraced "market socialism." Reforms under Presidents Raul Castro and Miguel Diaz-Canel are concessions, a necessary retreat to gather more strength. It was a 'bend but don't break' strategy.

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89. Successful Farming. 2023. "Russia Donates 25,000 Tonnes of Wheat to Ally Cuba as Ties Deepen."
Successful Farming. 2023. https://www.agriculture.com/markets/newswire/russia-donates-25000-tonnes-of-wheat-to-ally-cuba-as-ties-deepen.

The population is divided. Some everyday people ask out loud: "what is the difference between the Havana of today and that of 1958?" Others understand this is the War on Cuba in motion.[90]

The End of Rations?

Critics rush to judge and accuse Cuba of being trapped in a time warp. But why are they silent about the reality of 500 plus years of savage theft and pillaging and 65 years of crippling sanctions meant to bring Cuba to its knees?[91]

Before the aggravated crisis that began last year, every month, each member of a household in Cuba received the following centralized subsidies guaranteed from the government.

- 7 pounds of rice (it often arrives late)
- 10 ounces chickpeas and sometimes 10 ounces of black beans
- 1 pound of cooking oil every 2 months
- 1 kg of salt every 4 months
- 1 lb. of white sugar
- 2 lb. brown sugar
- 115 grams of coffee
- 1 bar of soap
- 1 bar of soap for every child, senior citizen, or sick person
- 80 grams of bread
- 7 eggs

90. Belly of the Beast Cuba. 2020. "The War on Cuba — Episode 2 - YouTube." Www.youtube.com. 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61hYxh9x61Y.

91. Swelling up with emotion, Cuban Americans in Miami cried to me about "how miserable and hungry children were in Cuba." They rattled off the usual clichés from *The Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*. Considering Cuba is a country that has dedicated itself to overcoming historical underdevelopment and there are no children with distended bellies full of parasites like so many countries in the Caribbean, I wondered if they really believed what they propagated.

- 1 lb. of chicken but there has been none since May
- 2 lbs of bologna or mixed, blended meat (*picadillo o mortadela*) to replace the lack of chicken
- Tobacco as needed
- 1 toothpaste for 1 to 3 people every four months

The capitalist press refers to these subsidies as "rations," conveniently ignoring what creates the need to ration in the first place. This "*canasta básica*" (basic basket) is what every Cuban receives every month. If a family wants fruit, vegetables, or anything beyond *la libreta* (the ration book), it is up to your own individual spending ability. Families told me about the creative artform it was to stretch such a meager amount of food for the entire month. For example, families saved up extra eggs for New Years Eve in order to be able to give their children some type of treat that night. "We cannot provide what is required for those with diabetes and other sick people," one nurse informed.

Children under seven also receive:

- 1/2 kg of milk/ children between 7 and 14, one bottle of yogurt
- 10 containers of baby food
- 1 pound of beef

The war on the Cuban state is synonymous with the squeezing and harsh punishment of the Cuban people. What was once proof of how the Cuban model of equality worked, has now for the most part been cut. Many Cubans my age and older say this is worse than the 1990's.

In the historical sense of underdevelopment, Cuba is no different than other Caribbean islands. If visas were suddenly granted to all, a high percentage of youth and citizens from the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, or Trinidad would leave in order to roll the dice in Miami, New York, Montreal, Barcelona and the other metropolises. This has little to do with the Cuban mode of production and everything to do with five hundred years of unequal development and Cuba's daring to resist imperialism.

Dwarfing Cuba's Potential and Cultivating the Counterrevolution

Ernesto “Che” Guevara studied the concept of underdevelopment as he grew to understand the realities of the Third World. In his article, “Cuba: Historical Exception or Vanguard in the Anticolonial Struggle?” (1961), Che asked: “What is 'underdevelopment'? A dwarf with an enormous head and swollen chest is 'underdeveloped,' insofar as his fragile legs and short arms do not match the rest of his anatomy. He is the product of an abnormal and distorted development. That is what we are in reality — we, who are politely referred to as 'underdeveloped.' In truth, we are colonial, semicolonial or dependent countries, whose economies have been deformed by imperialism, which has peculiarly developed only those branches of industry or agriculture needed to complement its own complex economy.”[92]

Guevara was studying the effects of neocolonial exploitation. Today, Cuba is the very dwarf Guevara described, but for a different reason, the impermeable U.S. economic and military blockade. A thorough understanding of the horrific effects of this undeclared U.S. war is necessary. These conditions result in precisely what the writers of these policies intended: hunger, hopelessness and chaos. Walking, conversing and staying in Arrollo Naranjo, La Lisa, Guanabo or any other neighborhood of Havana is to witness the blockade in action.

Recalcitrant cold warriors in Miami and New Jersey from both sides of the aisle work overtime to tighten the economic war and asphyxiate Cuba’s people.[93] Informed by their intelligence services, chief policy makers target the most marginalized populations to carry out their regime-change agenda. This was what we saw play out on July 11, 2021. As Cuban-American scholar Carlos Garrido analyzed for *Covert Action Magazine*, their objective is to fund and provoke an island-wide anti-government uprising and then highlight the heavy hand of the Cuban state to justify the next step of their regime-change operations.

The foreign policy establishment in Washington is divided over its approaches to Cuba: further isolation or a renewed commitment to penetration?

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92. Ernesto Guevara. *Socialism and Man in Cuba*. 1965: Ocean Press.

93. Garrido, Carlos L. “Anti-Government Protests in Cuba Provoked by U.S. Embargo Has Right-Wingers Salivating at the Prospect of Regime Change - CovertAction Magazine.” CovertAction Magazine - Exposing Covert Action Since 1978, August 12, 2021. https://covertactionmagazine.com/2021/08/12/anti-government-protests-in-cuba-provoked-by-u-s-embargo-has-right-wingers-salivating-at-the-prospect-of-regime-change/.

The *Helms-Burton Act* is, "a United States federal law that contains provisions that prevent foreign countries from engaging in international trade with Cuba by subjecting foreign nationals to travel restrictions and financial liabilities in the United States by punishing the banks and companies of other countries that do business with Cuba."[94] Freights or cargo bound for Cuba cannot stay in U.S. ports or pass through the Panama canal or those counties will be targeted by U.S. sanctions. The magazine *Science for the People* rigorously analyzes what these unilateral laws mean for the Cuban masses and their inability to access medicine.

Let's look at one example of how this all plays out. The U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control fined the German bank Commerzbank millions of dollars for doing business with Cuba between 2005 and 2007.[95] The U.S. Treasury and Justice Departments, the U.S. Federal Reserve and the New York City Department of Financial Services collected millions of dollars from the bank as punishment. Where did this money go?

In contrast to D.C. and Miami's hard-liners, the forces behind Obama sought a backdoor approach to recolonization.[96] Obama was respected in Cuba. Families were surprised a Black man could become the CEO of such a racist, class-stratified society. Cuban leadership, while open to a detente, warned that Obama was no friend. The 44th president represented the liberal wing of the ruling class who saw capital penetration as one of the many weapons, while still occupying Guantanamo, still imposing a crippling blockade and continuing to engage in covert regime change actions. Western Union, American Airlines, the Cruise ship industry, AT&T among a slew of investors drooled over this market of 11,000,000 off Florida's shore. In times of Woke Imperialism, this was the Trojan Horse strategy and Obama had the perfect complexion and smile for it. On January 12th, speaking for some of these interests, the *New York Times* even listed Cuba as one of their 52 places to travel in 2023.[97] While short-lived, the thaw gave Cuba some much needed breathing room and

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94. Publishing, SftP. 2023. "The US blockade and its effects on Cuban medicine • SftP Magazine." Science for the People Magazine. March 6, 2023. https://magazine.scienceforthepeople.org/online/the-us-blockade-and-its-effects-on-cuban-medicine/.

95. Newman, Ed. 2015. "U.S. further tightened blockade policy against Cuba in 2015." Radiohc.cu. Radio Habana Cuba. October 26, 2015. https://www.radiohc.cu/en/noticias/nacionales/73874-us-further-tightened-blockade-policy-against-cuba-in-2015.

96. Professor Danny Shaw. 2015. "Daniel Shaw on US Cuba Relations." YouTube. December 7, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kz5r3Grrrgk.

97. The New York Times. 2023. "52 Places to Go in 2023," January 13, 2023. https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/travel/52-places-travel-2023.html.

conditions on the island improved. Some friends even told me that with the potential thaw in Obama's last year in power, the leadership did not maintain the revolutionary billboards that had formed the background of everyone's pictures in Cuba for decades.

In the wake of the collapse of the socialist camp from 1989-1991, U.S. imperialism successfully isolated Cuba. On the other hand, capital from Spain, Italy, Mexico, Canada and beyond inserted itself into Cuba to make profits off tourism, construction and other industries.

The U.S.'s isolation of Cuba interrupted the ideological and economic dynamism of decades past.

As of 1989, Cuba was the most advanced society in Latin America in many respects. Today, everyone over 40 years of age longs for the decades prior to 1990 when there was a preponderance of food, consumer goods, a strong Cuban peso and an optimistic energy. Youth in Havana today largely feel disconnected from the process. For many, it seems the headlines of *Granma* and *Juventud Rebelde,* the official organs of the PCC and the Union of Youth Communists mean little. The director of Havana del Este's Cultural Center and participant in the San Isidro movement exclaimed that less than 25% of young people today identify with any of the leaders of the Cuban revolution. Others hold the view that Fidel, Raul and Miguel Diaz-Canel stand by their convictions and are not to blame. One metaphor often cited was from the NED-funded rap group Los Aldeanos: "our problem is not with the captain but with the ship's staff."[98] There is a perception that a mid-level bureaucracy has developed under the aging veteran leadership which intentionally deceived the people about the actual state of affairs in the streets of Havana.[99] While groups like Los Aldeanos became State Department assets, their lyrics speak to some of the real talk that is occurring in certain sectors of the population.

Are there really high rates of corruption in Cuba? I do not see proof of bureaucrats with mansions, fancy cars and Swiss bank accounts. Surely if a lower-level employee at a bakery or butchery siphons off some merchandise to get by, those with more economic access will have their petty hustles as well. This maneuvering has little to do with the "inevitability of absolute power

98. Fernando Ravsberg. *Havana Times*. "Are USAID's Dirty Tricks Over in Cuba?" Dec 26, 2014.

99. Robinson, Circles. 2014. "Are USAID's dirty tricks over in Cuba? - Havana Times. December 26, 2014. https://havanatimes.org/features/are-usaids-dirty-tricks-over-in-cuba/.

corrupting people" and more to do with the human quest to make everyday living easier. The capitalist cliché of greedy human nature is a convenient way of explaining away inequality before the downtrodden even dare to rebel.

"The second economy," commonly known as "the black market," is a necessity for families to get by, but there is still a high degree of discipline and selflessness among everyday people. However, from the perspective of a fellow Cuban who sees what they perceive to be functionaries living across town in Playa or El Vedado with slightly more access to consumer goods and travel, this can be irritating and provokes resentment.

A Step Back in order to Advance

In 2010, Raul Castro introduced market reforms that Cuba's detractors hoped were a harbinger for Cuba's transformation back to a capitalist economy. Out of necessity, the state had to lay off 500,000 workers and made some cuts to the *libreta de abesticimiento* (the family ration book that every family has in their home). Due to shortages deliberately caused by the intensification of the trade embargo, Cuba's inflation rate is an astronomical 39.1%. Financial blockades are designed to generate perilous inflation rates.[100] Other blockaded countries fare even worse: Venezuela's inflation rate is currently 250% and Zimbabwe's rate last year peaked at 667%.[101] In Cuba, one dollar is worth 315 pesos and a euro is worth 320 pesos. Access to dollars is the only way many people can eat. They can access the private Micro and Small Enterprises stores (MYPIMES) which sell food and other products at prices pegged to the dollar and euro. This means that to buy a pound of chicken in "the free market," a Cuban will spend up to 20 percent of their monthly salary. For two weeks of milk, they may spend two weeks of their salary. Many PCC vets say this is their worst economic moment yet. One community leader told me: "We don't have medication. I am a diabetic. We just keep losing weight. Look at these 25 pounds I have lost. Carlos Lazo's Bridges of Love (Puentes de Amor) program helps us but it is not enough."[102]

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100. "Cuba." 2024. FocusEconomics. 2024. https://www.focus-economics.com/country-indicator/cuba/inflation-eop/.

101. Ventura, Luca. 2024. "Inflation rate 2024: A global comparison." Global Finance Magazine. April 19, 2024. https://gfmag.com/data/economic-data/worlds-highest-lowest-inflation-rates/.

102. Carlos Lazo. "Puentes de Amor llama a caravana internacional contra el bloqueo este domingo". *Cubadebate.* 31 marzo 2024. http://www.cubadebate.cu/etiqueta/carlos-lazo/

How did everyday families experience this at the time of the reforms? The rations of coffee, eggs, rice, beans and other staples were cut back. Only pregnant women or the very sick received any beef. Rumors swirled that this was the end of *la libreta,* that is food subsidies, a lifeline for so many. At the PCC Congress in 2011, the elected leadership took one step back in order to take two steps forward. They were forced to open the island to foreign economic profiteering. Raul was depicted as a pragmatist, willing to work with foreign capital, whereas Fidel was understood to be a patriot who would not budge an inch. Cubans argued about which model was better.[103]

The Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Miguel Diaz-Canel represents a continuation of these policies. Diaz-Canel, who rose up through the ranks of the PCC became president in 2021, inheriting a Cuba up against the twin challenges of the blockade and the pandemic. Many Cubans see him as the continuation of principled leadership; others are indifferent.

Communism is based on the idea of providing enough for everyone and moving towards creating abundance for all. Of little comfort are these ideas when Hans, a 21 year-old aspiring body-builder, is trying to gain muscle mass on a nutritionally-empty diet of bread, rice, plantains and a scant amount of meat. As we have seen, the U.S. war of aggression is both subtle and at times an all-encompassing psychological and economic war.

The tried and true tactic of creating exhaustion within a restive population has been employed against the Sandinistas, the FMLN, the Southern African liberation movements, Iran and many other nations who have dared to stand up to the U.S.'s unipolar designs. Syria just fell because of a long, dirty, imperialist war. There is no free communism, developing with the solidarity and blessing of the world powers. Again, this is "war communism." Economic asphyxiation serves the U.S.'s objectives. But if they are not eating well in the neighborhoods of Arroyo Naranjo and Marianao, this is the reality in Regla and Playa as well. These are four municipalities on opposite sides of Havana which before 1959 represented the class and racial extremes in Havana. Some segments of the population, war-wary, battered and beaten down like a boxer in the 12th round who has had enough, are ready to submit. Cuba, a veteran of so many grueling heavy-weight fights, continues to adapt and push through the most challenging of times wondering out loud as so many families have expressed, "How much more of this can we take? Something has to give."

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103. Carlos Martinez. *The End of the Beginning: Lessons of the Soviet Collapse* LeftWord Books: 2019.

Activist and musician Carlos Martinez's *The End of the Beginning: Lessons of the Soviet Collapse* is necessary reading for all defenders of Cuba and other workers' states. Martinez plots the historical timeline behind the 1991 coup that culminated in the end of the 1917 Russian Revolution.[104] His research speaks to the challenges the Soviet leadership were up against in the final years of the USSR, much of which is all too relevant to Cuba today.

The Battle of Ideas

Fidel Castro highlighted the centrality of the ideological struggle, the showdown for the heart and soul of a people.[105]

On the 66th anniversary of the earth-shaking, watershed Cuban Revolution, it is important to critically assess who is winning the war of ideas in Cuba.[106] Many *Habaneros* urged me to tell their stories because they sense there is an over-glorification of Cuba's reality by Western leftist tourists and solidarity activists. Many told me something has to give. Either the expanded BRICS nations will incorporate Cuba into their multipolar economic, political and diplomatic expansion or the vultures will finish Cuba off. There is no in between.

Cuba's fight resembles the boxing career of Mohammed Ali. For the first three decades, the revolution was youthful, sharp, bold and invincible. Sumy's generation fought for Angola, sent 4,000 internationalists soldiers to Syria in 1973 to fight Zionism and stood with Grenada and the Sandinistas.[107] They admired and emulated the heroes of the revolution. This generation faces hunger, despair and isolation. With the collapse of the anti-capitalist rival pole of the Cold War era, Cuba has been left to fight on its own. Multipolarity is on the rise but as the Israeli-U.S.-Western genocide in Gaza and the temporary defeat of the Axis of Resistance shows, humanity is still years or perhaps

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104. Carlos Martinez. *The End of the Beginning: Lessons of the Soviet Collapse* LeftWord Books: 2019.

105. Castro Ruz, Fidel. "La Batalla de Ideas, nuestra arma política más poderosa". *Fidel Soldado de las ideas.* Domingo, 22 de diciembre de 2024. http://www.fidelcastro.cu/es/libros/la-batalla-de-ideas-nuestra-arma-politica-mas-poderosa

106. "La Batalla de Ideas, Nuestra Arma Política Más Poderosa | Fidel Soldado de Las Ideas." 2024. Fidelcastro.cu.
2024. http://www.fidelcastro.cu/es/libros/la-batalla-de-ideas-nuestra-arma-politica-mas-poderosa.

107. Domingo Amuchastegui."Cuba in the Middle East: A Brief Chronology". *U.S Department of state.* July, 1999. https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/wha/ci/cu/14745.htm

decades away from transcending the reality of U.S. unipolar hegemony. Like Ali's final rounds, exhausted, with his vulnerabilities exposed, the island nation still somehow miraculously pushes through, finding and inventing a way forward. Unlike a prize fighter, the descendents of José Martí and Fidel Castro have never had the option of giving up or retiring. ▮

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Philosophical Collaboration of Social Christians and Communists during the Cold War

Toby Terrar[1]

This article is about the philosophical collaboration of the social Christians who took the side of the communists during the cold war.[2] By collaboration they meant learning from and helping the communists, and vice versa. They argued their philosophy conformed both to the church's teachings and to Marxism. Their philosophy was dialectical materialism.

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2. The term "social Christian" was used by a number of political parties and by their members in recognition of their solidarity with the social encyclicals which began in 1891 with Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* and include Pope Pius XI's 1931 encyclical *Quadragesimo anno.*

The social Christians were political activists. None wrote a systematic treatise on Thomistic dialectical materialism, but they referred to it and relied on it in their work.

The source for the discussion will be largely but not entirely the philosophical writings of the Parisian priest, Father Jean Boulier (1895-1980). In the immediate post-World War II era he served as the professor of Christian Legal Principles at the Catholic University of Paris, until the position was abolished because of his politics. Before becoming a diocesan priest in 1933, he had been a Jesuit and his philosophy was Thomism.

Called the "Red Priest" because of his friendship with the communists, Fr. Boulier never joined the French Communist Party (PCF), but he published in their press, spoke at their events, advised them on church matters, was active in their auxiliary organizations and ministered to them in his working class parish.[3]

Fr. Boulier's mission extended to Eastern Europe, where Christians in significant numbers sided with the communists in the post-war period. This included priests, nuns and some bishops. He worked with their clerical organizations, including PAX in Poland, the Association of Priests for Peace in Hungary, and the Movement of Patriotic Priests and Catholic Action in Czechoslovakia.[4] They published his writings and sponsored his speaking tours to their countries with audiences as large as 100,000 people.[5] Their members held political offices and contributed positively to their socialist societies.

1. Materialism

In teaching philosophy, Fr. Boulier emphasized the similarity of Marxist and Christian philosophy. For example, Engels had written about how thinkers

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3. Fr. Boulier documented his ministry in the autobiography *I was a Red Priest: Memories and Testimonials* (New York: Red Star-CWPublisher, 2022). ISBN 0976416832. It was first published as *J'étais un prêtre rouge: souvenirs et témoignages* (Paris: Éditions de l'Athanor, 1977). By way of further background, during World War II, Fr. Boulier worked in the resistance movement on the side of the Jews against the Nazi and Vichy governments. As a result Israel (Y*ad Vashem*) is currently considering conferring upon on him the title, "Righteous among the Nations."

4. See Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, pp. 220 and 479 (Czechoslovakia), 313 (Bishop Jan Dechet), 486 (Hungary), 192-193 (Poland).

5. *Ibid*., p. 220.

were historically divided on how they answered the question about the relation between thinking and being. He commented, "Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature … comprised the camp of idealism. The others, who regarded nature as primary, belong to the various schools of materialism."[6]

Fr. Boulier held that like the Marxists, the Christians were materialists. On this he cited Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), who was the church's leading philosopher.[7] Aquinas wrote in his treatise, *De veritate*, as quoted by Fr. Boulier, "Nothing is in the intellect that was not first in the senses."[8] In this he maintained that Aquinas summarized his rejection of innate ideas and along with them the Platonic minimization of the material world.

As mentioned, in addition to Fr. Boulier, there were other Thomistic philosophers, including anti-communists, who understood the philosophical compatibility of Thomism and Marxism. Among these the Dominicans or Order of Preachers (OP) were prominent. Illustrative was Fr. Joseph Bochenski, OP (1902-1995), a Polish noble who spoke Russian. He was a philosophy professor at Rome's Pontifical University of Saint Thomas Aquinas. He wrote of his experience:

> *Marxist-Leninists and Thomists would realize they are standing together, and practically alone, in the contemporary world of skeptics, irrationalists, and subjectivists. A few years ago I attended an international meeting of logicians and methodologists at Stanford. The most pathetic figures at that meeting were [the Soviet] professor B. M. Kedrov and a Dominican priest, Father William Humbert Kane, OP [1901-1970]. Both were desperately trying to explain to the mass of logicians present that there is something*

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6. Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, [1886], 1946); online version: Marx Engels Internet Archive at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1886/ludwig-feuerbach/ch02.htm.

7. Editions of Thomas Aquinas's complete works include*, Opera omnia*, vols. 1–25 (Parma: 1852–73, Reprinted, New York: 1948); *Opera omnia*, vols. 1–34 (Paris: 1871–80); and *Opera omnia*, vols. 1–16 (Rome: Ex Typographia Polyglotta S.C. de Propaganda Fide, 1882, incomplete ed.).

8. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, p. 321, citing Aquinas, *Truth (Quaestiones disputatae, de veritate)* (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1952-1954, 1994, LCCN 94029598), vol. 1, pp. 69, 76; the citation form is Q. 2, Art. 3, ad 19; Latin edition: *Opera omnia. T. 9, Quaestiones disputatae cum quodlibetis: volumen secundum* (vol. 2) (Parma: Fiaccadori Publishers, 1859, OCLC 310765548), v. 9, pp. 28 and 31. According to the Rockefeller University historian of science Paul F. Cranefield (1925-2003), the *Quaestiones* date to 1256-1259 AD. See Cranefield,"Notes and Events," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* (January 1970), vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 77-89. The Latin for the cited passage is "Nihil est in intellectu quod non sit prius in sensu."

> *which can be called an essence, and that science is, after all, in search of such essences. . . Most of their listeners were hardened positivists, who consider all talk about essences as pure mythology.*[9]

Just as there were non-communist Christians who appreciated Marxist-Leninist philosophy, there were non-Christian communists who appreciated Thomistic philosophy. Illustrative was the Soviet philosopher Sergei S. Averintsev (1937-2004), who eventually became a member of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. In the following he discussed Aquinas's anti-idealist methodology:

> *The task that Thomas set for himself was to create a systematic order of the many within the one, rather than to contemplate the one in isolation from the many; he sought, as it were, to deduce the existence of god from the existence of things. In this respect, Thomas' thinking is in contrast to the abstract speculation of early Scholasticism (as exemplified by Anselm of Canterbury)—a school of thought that was in line with Plato, Neoplatonism, and Augustine. Under the rubrics of the* Summa theologiae*, the same schemes of thought are imposed on an infinite variety of specific questions, ranging from the five proofs of the existence of god to a definition of the limits of what is or is not permissible in the conduct of financial affairs.*[10]

Finally, on the issue of materialism, Fr. Boulier had the support of church councils and popes. About this, the scholar Rev. Sebastian A. Matczak, a former professor of theology and philosophy at St. John's University, wrote in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* concerning fideism, which also goes by the name *sola fides* or priority of faith over reason (as opposed to common sense):

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9. Joseph Bochenski, OP, "Thomism and Marxism-Leninism," *Studies in Soviet Thought* (June 1967), vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 154-168, at p. 163. According to Professor Guido Küng, Fr. Bochenski in 1956 was instrumental in the banning of the German Communist Party. Its offense was that it was continuing to fight against the same interests that it had opposed during the war. See Küng, "Memoriam: Joseph (Innocent) M. Bochenski, OP," *The Review of Metaphysics* (September 1995), vol. 49, no. 1, pp. 217-218.

10. Sergei S. Averintsev, "Thomas Aquinas," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (3rd Edition, 1970-1979, New York: Macmillan, 1979), vol. 15, pp. 559-563, at p. 559, online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/thomas+Aquinas. See also, Anonymous, "Deceased Academicians: Serguei Averintsev," (Vatican City: The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 2004), online at https://www.pass.va/en/academicians/deceased/averintsev.html. In addition to the pontifical appointment, he was also awarded the Lenin Komsomol Prize in 1968.

> *Pius X in the encyclical* Lamentabili *(1907) rejected the opinion that the assent of faith is based on a series of probable opinions (Denzinger, 2121); and in* Pascendi *(1910) he called attention to the decree of Vatican Council I, that humans are capable of knowing with certainty, by natural reason, God's existence and the credibility of divine revelation through external signs, and not only through a subjective experience or inspiration (Denzinger, 3026, 3034).*[11]

2. Neo-Thomism

In teaching Aquinas's materialism, the social Christians had allies among the clergy and laity. At the same time, their doctrine was not the church's official version. The official version was called neo-Thomism.[12] Its opponents maintained that the official school had abandoned the historical Aquinas because, among other reasons, he was too materialistic.

The critics saw the origins of neo-Thomism as dating back not to Aquinas but to Pope Leo XIII's encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (Eternal Father), issued in 1879.[13] That encyclical set out what were seen as the principles of neo-Thomism. It stated that the Aristotelian scientific method of Aquinas was the philosophy which the Church needed. At the same time it emphasized the metaphysical features of scholasticism, not the empirical sciences and the history of philosophy.

Among the neo-Thomist leaders was Fr. Joseph Maréchal, SJ (1878-1944), a Belgian Jesuit who taught at the University of Leuven. Prompted by the call of Pope Leo XIII to revitalize Thomist philosophy, he started studying in depth the works of Aquinas along with the works of other scholastic thinkers and modern philosophers. From this, and in particular from Kant's transcendental idealism,

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11. Sebastian A. Matczak, "Fideism," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, McGraw-Hill [1967], 1989), vol. 5, p. 712, citing Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus fidei et Morum* (ed. A Adolf Schönmetzer (Freiburg 1963). See also, Fergus Kerr, OP, "Knowing God by Reason Alone: What Vatican I Never Said," *New Blackfriars* (May 2010), vol. 91, no. 1033, pp. 215-228 (natural reason has possibility of knowing God's existence , but cannot prove it).

12. Neo-Thomism also went by the name Roman school, "neo-scholasticism" and "modern scholastic theology."

13. Pope Leo XIII, *Aeterni Patris: Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Restoration of Christian Philosophy* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1879), online at https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_04081879_aeterni-patris.html

emerged what its proponents called a new and more dynamic Thomism, recapturing the union of "act and power" in Aquinas.[14]

Fr. Maréchal's neo-Thomism paralleled the abandonment of materialism throughout European bourgeois philosophy that started in the aftermath of the French Revolution. This was commented upon in 1900 by Paul Lafargue (1842-1911), who led the French Workers Party and collaborated with the Catholic workers as a deputy to the French Parliament from 1891 to 1893.[15]

Lafargue wrote the following about the history of the retreat from materialism to Kantian idealism:

> *At the beginning of the nineteenth century our bourgeoisie, having completed its task of revolutionary destruction, began to repudiate its Voltairean and free-thinking philosophy. Catholicism, which the master decorator Chateaubriand painted in romantic colours (*peinturlurait*), was restored to fashion, and Sebastian Mercier imported the idealism of Kant in order to give the* coup de grâce *to the materialism of the Encyclopaedists, whose protagonists had been guillotined by Robespierre.*
>
> *At the end of the nineteenth century, which will go down in history as the "bourgeois century," the intellectuals attempted to crush the materialism of Marx and Engels beneath the philosophy of Kant. The reactionary movement started in Germany.*[16]

As the leader of the Workers Party, Lafargue offered in common sense terms the following explanation of Kantian agnosticism to "the comrades who have to acquaint themselves with bourgeois philosophy":

> *The workingman who eats sausage and receives a hundred sous a day knows very well that he is robbed by the employer and is nourished by*

14. Ronald McCamy, *Out of a Kantian chrysalis?: a Maritainian critique of Fr. Marechal* (New York: P. Lang, c1998), 180 p. LCCN 97010691.

15. Viktor Dalin, "Paul Lafargue," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (3rd Edition, 1970-1979, New York: Macmillan, 1979), vol. 14, pp. 167-168, online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com.

16. Paul Lafargue, *Socialism and the intellectuals* (Brooklyn, NY: Labor News, 1967). 22 p. LCCN 68001877, quoted in Vladimir Lenin, *Materialism and empirio-criticism; critical comments on a reactionary philosophy* (New York: Red Star Publishers, [1909], 2014), LCCN 53025513, p. 170.

> *pork meat, that the employer is a robber and that the sausage is pleasant to the taste and nourishing to the body.*
>
> *Not at all, say the bourgeois sophists, whether they are called Pyrrho, Hume or Kant. His opinion is personal, an entirely subjective opinion; he might with equal reason maintain that the employer is his benefactor and that the sausage consists of chopped leather, for he cannot know* things-in-themselves.[17]

The proponents of neo-Thomism maintained their interpretation was the ultimate expression of philosophy to which all Catholic thought must remain faithful. Materialism and other philosophies were labeled ”modernism” and as being inimical to Christian philosophy. Of particular concern were:

> *(1) the use of the historical-critical method in biblical exegesis;*
>
> *(2) the belief that dogmas were not immutable and that ecclesial dogmatic formulas could change both in interpretation and in content; and*
>
> *(3) the belief that revelation continued up to and including the present day and, therefore, did not stop with the death of the last apostle.*

Starting in 1910 the neo-Thomists required the clergy to take an oath against modernism.[18] But as Fr. Boulier pointed out the popes were ineffective at stopping moderism among the critical-thinking clergy and laity at the local level.[19] Fr. Boulier spoke of his own critical thinking and “metaphysics” as a student about 1919 in dealing with neo-Thomism:

> *Literary criticism had led me to the history of dogmas, then with St. John of the Cross, to criticism of religious knowledge, which Henri Bremond was to analyze as the metaphysics of the saints.*[20]

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17. *Ibid*.

18. The text of the oath is in Pope Pius X’s decree (*motu proprio*), titled *Sacrorum antistitum* (The antithesis of the sacred), online at https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius10/p10moath.htm.

19. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, p. 198.

20. *Ibid*., p. 57. Henri Brémond (1865–1933) was a French literary scholar, sometime Jesuit, and Catholic philosopher, one of the theological modernists. He worked on the Jesuit publication *Études*. He left the Society of Jesus in 1904, but remained a priest. In 1909 he was temporarily suspended *a divinis* for his presence at and an address he gave and for making a sign of the cross over George Tyrrell‘s grave at his funeral. Tyrrell was a modernist and Brémond’s friend. Among his publications were *Prayer & poetry: a contribution to poetical theory* (Norwood, Pa.: Norwood Editions, 1976); and *Thundering abbot, Armand de Rancé, reformer of La Trappe* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1930).

By the post-World War II era, there was significant resistance against the church's position on modernism. Those who were critical of the neo-Thomists went by several names: *ressourcement* (return to the sources), *nouvelle théologie* (new theology), or reformers. Among them, only a few of whom were materialists, much less social Christians, were the Jesuits Jean Daniélou (1905-1974), Henri de Lubac (1896-1991), Henri Bouillard (1908-1981), Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944), Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), the Dominicans Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990), Yves Congar (1904-1995), Dominique Dubarle (1907-1987), Henri-Marie Féret (1904-1992), and the laity Étienne Gilson (1884-1978) and Jacques Maritain, (1882-1973).

Professor Gabriel Flynn of Dublin City University summarized the dispute in the post-war period:

> *The fierce intellectual clash of arms between the reformists and those of the classical French Thomist School, epitomized in the neo-Thomism of the* Revue Thomiste *in the period 1946-1948, that included such [neo-Thomist] luminaries as Marie-Michel Labourdette, OP and Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, ultimately resulted in the promulgation by Pope Pius XII of the controversial encyclical* Humani generis *[human race] in 1950, with devastating consequences for the leaders of the [critical thinking] ressourcement.*[21]

The modernists were beaten in 1950, but a decade later in the 1960s at Vatican II the neo-Thomists were in the minority and the object of criticism, so that in 1967 the official church (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with the approval of Paul VI) abandoned the anti-modernism oath. The Jesuit philosopher Gerald A. McCool, commented on the shifting fortunes of the neo-Thomists:

> *Unfortunately, the old alliance between integralism and right-wing politics had been restored at Rome [in 1950]. The [critical] theology appeared to be a dangerous flirtation with modern thought and Marxist politics. The encyclical,* Humani Generis*, and the disciplinary measure taken by their general superiors against liberal Jesuits and Dominicans, brought the movement to a sudden end. For the moment Rome's*

21. Gabriel Flynn, "A Renaissance in Twentieth-Century French "Catholic Philosophy," *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* (2020), vol. 76 (4), pp. 1559-1592, at p. 1560.

> *intervention gave the impression that the traditional [neo-] Thomists had won the day. Actually they had lost.*[22]

According to Fr. Boulier, the neo-Thomism issue was part of the reason Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council. He wanted to liberate what he called the "real" church from the "official" church. Fr. Boulier learned of this when Monsignor Angelo Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, was the papal nuncio to France. During this period, he and the nuncio became friends. In one of their meetings at the nuncio's residence on Avenue du President Wilson in Paris, the nuncio remarked to Fr. Boulier, "You are, in one field (*un'campo*), and the Church is in another. You know, popes change their politics."[23] That was, as Fr. Boulier later commented, "to make me understand that I had to be patient, to wait for a change to come."

But for Fr. Boulier the nuncio's answer was not good enough and at a later meeting he followed up, "I am very touched, Excellency, by the kindness you always welcome me. But I must tell you that last time you scandalized me greatly. Yes, you told me that I was in one camp and the church in another. But the Church cannot be in a camp: it is everywhere where there are friends of God." The nuncio responded, "I meant the official Church." From which Fr. Boulier concluded:

> *So it was not the Church? And that is why a few years later, in order to free himself from the "official Church" he convened the Council, which for him, represented the Church.*[24]

From the social Christian view, the Vatican Council may have helped the "real" church against the "official church," but it did little for the teaching of philosophical materialism. Fr. Bochenski, who, as mentioned, was a dialectical materialist, if not a social Christian, commented in 1967:

> *The Church has reversed its old policy, and it seems that in most of its schools Thomism is no longer being taught. Mystical ideologists, like*

22. Gerald A. McCool, "Twentieth-Century Scholasticism," *The Journal of Religion* (University of Chicago Press: 1978), vol. 58, supplement, pp. S198-S221, at S216.

23. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, pp. 213-214.

24. *Ibid*., p. 214.

> *Teilhard de Chardin and existentialisms of every possible shade seem to be far more popular among Catholics than Thomism. A leading representative of one of the most important philosophical institutes, and supposedly a Thomist, said in public that no philosophy of being is possible without reference to the self. Thomism is undergoing one of its greatest defeats in history.*[25]

Besides mysticism and existentialism, Professor Benedict M. Ashley, OP (1915-2013), in discussing the materialism of Fr. William Humbert Kane, OP (1901-1970), enumerated several other prominent but, in his view, deviant Thomistic idealists, for whom philosophizing was a "mere word game":

> *According to Fr. Kane, to attempt to build a Thomistic metaphysics on the Cartesian* Cogito ego sum*, or on the "concept of Being" as did many traditional Thomists, or on some "metaphysical intuition" as Jacques Maritain claimed to do, or even on the "judgment of the act of* esse*" as did Étienne Gilson, simply will not work. All these ways of grounding metaphysics, Kane argued, left it open to the modern charge that it is a mere word game.*[26]

Yet another criticism of the Thomistic "system builders," utopians and transcendentalists, came from the Fribourg University academic, Fr. Louis Bertrand Geiger, OP (1906-1983). Their idealistic philosophy taught "the illusions and mirages with which imagination and language continually cover it." He summarized:

> *Under various influences, a goodly number of philosophers have come to believe that the point of departure proposed by Descartes for philosophy, which has been taken up again and again by "system builders," is too utopian. When philosophers reflect sufficiently on the real conditions of philosophy, they find that it cannot begin with a pure subject (e.g., the* Cogito*, or a transcendental subject, of whatever nature this might be) or with a pure given, as does mathematics. Man's thought begins, and can*

25. Bochenski, "Thomism and Marxism-Leninism," p. 165.

26. Benedict M. Ashley, OP, *Atheism Bumps into Reality: A Conversion Story*, (Chicago: Studies and Reflections by and about Benedict M. Ashley, OP. Dominican Central Province, c. 2007), p. 204, online at https://isidore.co/CalibreLibrary/Ashley.

> *only begin, with an initial situation that implies the presence and openness of his being, at all its levels, to a world that makes sense from the beginning, a sense that he never ceases to interrogate in order to discover its deepest meaning.*[27]

As seen, Thomists were critical of what they viewed as the idealist distortions of the material world. It should not be surprising, therefore, that idealists such as Professor Thomas Blakeley (1931-1989) at Boston College, the editor of *Studies in Soviet Thought*, was in turn critical of dialectical materialism. He believed that only idealism qualified as philosophy. He commented, "The first thing that strikes one about this doctrine [dialectical materialism] is its naïveté: almost all its affirmations are prephilosophical and commonsensical."[28]

For social Christians common sense was also philosophy and working people were philosophers. The Soviet philosopher Averintsev complemented Aquinas for having, as he put it, clothed the doctrines of faith in the vestments of common sense.[29] Along the same lines, Fr. Chenu praised Aquinas for having entered "into the distress of the world, the suffering of souls and bodies."[30]

3. Dialectic, Potency and Revolution

In their philosophical collaboration with the communists, the Christians found support in Thomism for the dialectical aspect of Marxism, just as they did for the material aspect. The Soviet philosophers Aleksei Losev **(**1893-1988**)** and Alexander Spirkin writing in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, began their definition of the dialectic in an abstract manner as "the doctrine of the most general principles of emergence and development, whose internal source is viewed as the unity of and conflict between opposites."[31] They contrasted the

27. Louis Bertrand Geiger, "Christian Philosophy," *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. (New York: Gale, 2003), vol. 3, pp. 538-542. at p. 541.

28. Thomas J. Blakeley, "Materialism, Dialectical and Historical." *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd (New York: Gale, 2003), vol. 9, pp. 322-325, at p. 324.

29. Averintsev, "Thomas Aquinas," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 27, pp. 25-26.

30. Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Retrait au Saulchoir" [Withdrawal from Saulchoir], 1941 (Archives O.P. de France), pp. 8, 34, quoted in Potworowski, *Contemplation and incarnation*, at p. 31.

31. Aleksei Losev **(**1893-1988**)** and Alexander G. Spirkin, "Dialectic," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 185, online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/dialectical+materialism. See also, Alexander Spirkin, *Dialectical materialism* (Moscow: Progress

dialectic's "movement" view of reality with the view of things and phenomena as unchanging and independent of each other.

In the Soviet analysis the role of Hegel in understanding the dialectic was emphasized. Professors Losev and Spirkin commented:

> *According to Hegel, the dialectic encompassed the entire area of reality, beginning with purely logical categories, passing further on into the areas of nature and the spirit, and ending up with the categorical dialectic of the entire historical process. The Hegelian dialectic is a systematically developed science; Hegel was the first to present the general working of dialectics in a comprehensive and conscious manner.*[32]

Hegel's three laws of logic were summarized:

> *1) the law of the transformation of quantity to quality;*
>
> *2) the law of the unity and progress resulting from the struggle of opposites or contradiction; and*
>
> *3) the law of the negation of the negation.*[33]

In discussing the concept of dialectics, Fr. Bochenski suggested that Thomism had the same concept, but used the word "potency" for it, as had Aristotle, from whom it was borrowed. The Dominican wrote:

Publishers, 1983), 342 pp.; and Spirkin, *Fundamentals of Philosophy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, I990). Losev was a university professor and Russian Orthodox monk. Ordained in 1929, he was active in a splinter group called Onomatodoxy, which was based on the idea that the Name of God is God Himself. Among his writings were eight monograph volumes, which he began in 1923. In the last of them, *The Dialectics of Myth*, he took the side of the bourgeoisie. As a result he spent several years in the early 1930s in Lubyanka and Butyrskaia Prisons, and in a labor camp engaged in building the White Sea-Baltic Canal. Maxim Gorky regretted that he was not executed. At the same time, Gorky's first wife, Ekaterina Peshkova, as head of the Political Red Cross, won his release from a ten-year term and he returned to Moscow in 1933, where he went back to philosophy teaching. See Sergei Khoruzhii, *"*A Rearguard Action,*"* *Russian Studies in Philosophy* (M. E. Sharpe: 2002), vol. 40, no. 3, pp. 30–68, at p. 48-49, online at https://synergia-isa.ru/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/hor_losev.pdf.

32. Losev and Spirkin, "Dialectic,"), vol. 8, p. 185. See also, K. Marx, *Kapital*, vol. 1, 1955, p. 19

33. Marx and Engels did not use the term "dialectical materialism." Marx talked about the "materialist conception of history," as in *The German Ideology* (1845), online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/. Engels referred to it as "historical materialism" and "materialist dialectic" in 1883 in his *Dialectics of Nature*. It was Georgi Plekhanov who was among the first to use the term "dialectical materialism," when he wrote in 1891 on Hegel and Marx.

> *There seems to be a striking similarity between the Thomistic concept of potency and that of dialectics in Marxism-Leninism. Both are used wherever we meet with serious ontological difficulties, as in the problem of movement.*[34]

The correlate of potency was "act," which expressed its completion. The Fordham University professor Fr. William Norris Clarke, SJ (1915-2008) in the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* defined potency:

> *Potency, a technical term used principally in philosophy and theology, is the capacity or aptitude in a being to receive some perfection or perform some action. Always a relative term, it means capacity "for" something , e.g., potency to receive energy, to grow, to learn mathematics, to become wise, virtuous. The correlate of potency is act, which expresses the fully present realization or completion of potency.*[35]

As discussed, the general theory of act and potency, with its terminology, originated with Aristotle and became the central doctrine of his philosophy.[36] For him, potency was necessary to explain change, that is, the transition from one mode of being to another, or the coming-to-be of some new being or mode of being.

Like Fr. Bochenski, the Soviets found the same resemblance of potency to dialectic in their analysis of Aristotle. Professors Losev and Spirkin commented:

> *Aristotle, who transformed Platonic ideas into the forms of things and, moreover, introduced the doctrine of potentiality and energy (as well as a number of other, analogous doctrines), developed dialectic further. In his doctrine of the four causes—material, formal, final and efficient—Aristotle asserted that all of them exist in everything, and each is completely indivisible and identical with the thing it exists in. Aristotle's doctrine of a*

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34. Bochenski, "Thomism and Marxism-Leninism," p. 155. Aquinas used the term "dialectic," which he borrowed from Aristotle but used it in the classical Greek sense, which was tied to rhetoric and persuasion.

35. William Norris Clarke, "Potency," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, McGraw-Hill [1967], 1989), vol. 11, pp. 554-557, at p. 554.

36. Aristotle, *Physics,* 187a 12-192b 3; *Metaphysics.* 1045b 27-1052a 12.

> *prime mover who thinks himself—in other words, is himself both subject and object—is a fragment of the very same dialectic. By designating the doctrine of probable judgments and conclusions or the doctrine of appearances as dialectic, Aristotle provides a dialectic of becoming, since potentiality itself is only possible in the sphere of becoming.*[37]

Lenin praised Aristotle as being dialectical in all but name. He wrote, "Aristotle's logic is an inquiry, a searching, an approach to Hegel's logic—and it, the logic of Aristotle… *everywhere*, at every step, raises *precisely* the question of *dialectics*."[38] The Christians made the same claim for Aquinas. Illustrative was Fr. Bochenski when he was discussing the general laws of nature, which, as he put it, could only be understood as dialectical:

> *For the Soviets humans are certainly the highest entity in nature, but they still are a part of it, even if a very peculiar part. One cannot understand anything in anthropology without starting with the general laws of nature, with the study of dialectics, i.e. with dialectical materialism. In that respect also, Thomism is one of the very few trends which assumes a similar attitude. Practically all other present-day philosophic trends, linguistic analysis, existentialism, the recent forms of phenomenology, neo-Kantianism (which appears to be still alive) and the Western variety of 'Marxism' are anthropocentric.*[39]

Echoing Fr. Bochenski, the Jesuit, Fr. Clarke noted that the "clear and distinct ideas" of Cartesian rationalism, the radical empiricism of the English tradition culminating in Hume, the conception of nature found in mechanism – "all had no place for the authentic conception of potency."[40] Rather, these idealistic philosophies sought to impose their own image on the world of things.[41] They needed as Fr. Clarke put it, the "ontological grounding of dynamic substance or

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37. Losev and Spirkin, "Dialectic."

38. Vladimir Lenin, "Conspectus of Aristotle's Book Metaphysics," *Collected Works* (4th Edition, Moscow: Progress Publishers, [1915], 1976), vol. 38, pp. 363-372, online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1915/misc/x12.htm.

39. Bochenski, "Thomism and Marxism-Leninism," p. 164. Friedrich Engels made a similar argument about nature and the dialectic in *Dialectics of nature* (New York: International Publishers, 1883, 1940), 383 pp.

40. Clarke, "Potency," p. 557.

41. J.C. Taylor, "Potency and Act," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York, McGraw-Hill [1967], 1989), vol. 11, pp. 557-560, at p. 559.

nature as a unified center for its many relations and its self-identity through time."[42]

From the Soviet view, science and the dialectic were closely related. They took a positive view of Aristotle for his scientific writings. The Christians had a similar view of Aquinas, who adopted Aristotle's science and expanded on it. The Dominican Fr. William A. Wallace, OP (1918-2015), commented about Thomistic science, arguing it uncovered the secrets of nature:

> *Whereas scholars in the Early Middle Ages [476-1000 AD] were content with dialectics and its [Abelard's]* sic et non *[yes or no] procedures, later to be refined into the scholastic disputation, those of the High Middle Ages [1000-1250 AD] were strongly attracted to the ideal of science found in [Aristotle's]* Posterior Analytics*, newly introduced into the Latin West at the end of the twelfth century. Recent studies of William of Auvergne, Robert Grosseteste, Roger Bacon, Albertus Magnus, and Thomas Aquinas reveal how these investigators rediscovered the* Analytics *and applied it methodically to uncovering the secrets of nature. All had confidence that truth and certitude could be attained using the Aristotelian canons, that they could arrive not merely at "knowledge of the fact" but also at "knowledge of the reasoned fact" once its causes were properly ascertained.*[43]

Revolutionary Thirteenth Century. Joining in on the Dominican argument, Fr. Bouiler in his teaching about the positive role of the dialectic in the history of Christian philosophy maitained that Aquinas's encounter with Aristotle was itself dialectical. There was conflict and progressive systhesis to the benefit of Christian philosophy. Furthermore, he argued that such dialectical confrontations with adversaries and positive results were a Christian tradition and that Marxism was another of them. He wrote:

Is it not possible that unity of action [between Christians and communists] does generate unity of thought? Take holy water said Pascal, naturally it will make you believe and you will be stupid. Working together, we end up thinking

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42. William Norris Clarke, "Clarke's Journey: In His Own Words," online at http://www.anthonyflood.com/clarke.htm.

43. William A. Wallace, "Aristotelian Science and Rhetoric in Transition: The Middle Ages and the Renaissance," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* (Winter 1989), vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 7-21, at p. 9.

together. Over the course of their two thousand years of existence, Christians have found themselves confronted with systems of thought from which faith has finally emerged, not without struggle but not without exchanges and fruitful borrowing: Gnosis, Platonism, Neo-Platonism, Stoicism, the Aristotelianism of Averroes, turned into Thomism, Cartesianism insinuating itself masked, *larvatus prodes* [I go around masked], of Descartes and then deserting Aristotle, clearly claiming to be Epicurean, Saint Thomas More, Erasmus, Gassendi, the liberalism of the nineteenth century proscribed by Archbishop Lefebvre, denounced as satanic by Joseph de Maistre and all the fundamentalists but magnificently rectified by Leo XIII and his great Encyclicals. And so why not Marxism? *Exhibit Karolum Christo militantem* [Karl (Marx) Christian militant]. Will Christians of the twenty-first century face Marxism other than to curse it?[44]

In his ministry Fr. Boulier publicized the dialectical synthesis of Marxist and Thomistic philosophy as being part of Christian tradition. One of his allies, Fr. Chenu, played a similar role in his ministry. Like Fr. Boulier he was a university professor who lost his job because of politics. He then was part of the priest-worker movement in the diocese of Paris until Rome shut that ministry down because of politics.[45]

In his teaching about the dialectic, Fr. Chenu argued that it was not only Thomistic philosophy that came out of the thirteenth-century revolution but the Dominicans themselves. The order was established in 1215, as Fr. Chenu put it, because of the activism of "Gospel-spirited Mendicants, … the discoverers of Aristotle."[46] They challenged the lack of science and respect for the material world in Christian philosophy and educational institutions. To the Dominicans, science involved a return to the Gospel.[47] They had a hand in the schools and

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44. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, pp. 311-312.

45. Walter Principe, "Chenu, M.-D.," in Richard McBrien, (ed.). *The HarperCollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996). pp. 303–304.

46. Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Toward understanding Saint Thomas* (Introduction à l'étude de saint Thomas d'Aquin) (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1964), LCCN 64014598; 386 pp. at p. 2; Christophe Potworowski, *Contemplation and incarnation: the theology of Marie-Dominique Chenu* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), LCCN 2004298327; 330 pp. at p. 145.

47. Marie-Dominique Chenu, *Is theology a science?* (Théologie est-elle une science?) (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1959), LCCN 59006732; 126 p.; Michael J. Dodds, OP, *Unlocking divine action: contemporary science & Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, c2012), LCCN 2012003185, 311 pp.; Michael J. Dodds, OP, "The reception of Aquinas in the philosophy of nature and science," *The Oxford handbook of the reception of Aquinas*, ed. Matthew Levering (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2021), LCCN 2020940646, 730 pp.

universities that flourished at that time at Paris, Bologna, Oxford and Colone. Aquinas himself was a professor at the University of Paris.[48]

In bringing science into the education of the clergy, among the main works used by the Dominicans were Aquinas's *Summa theologiae* (1265-1274 AD, consisting of close to 3,000 articles and left uncompleted) and his *Summa contra gentiles* (1270-1273 AD). As noted above, Professor Averintsev taught that these works clothed the doctrines of faith in the vestments of common sense. Following in the footsteps of Albertus Magnus, they went back to Aristotle as a source for his concepts—namely, Aristotle's "common sensibles" and the idea of a system of "natural" reason as the underpinning of "supernatural" dogma.[49]

For Fr. Chenu the *Summas* clothed the doctrines not only in common sense but in a revolutionary sense. He commented:

Since the 16th century, when Luther harnessed all the evangelical forces, we [Dominicans] have been afraid of this strong wine, and we leave the world to its misery and ignorance. It is now others who have stepped in (e.g. Marx)… We must enter into the distress of the world, the suffering of souls and bodies.[50]

The Soviet medievalist Boris Ramm (1902-1989) in studying the 13th-century Dominican revolution emphasized that they were the main defenders of Thomistic integralism against the imperial authority, local church hierarchies, cities, and universities. This doctrine maintained that secular and spiritual power had to be united, with the spiritual power (papacy) supreme. There was no separation of church and state. Ramm summarized:

In 1227 the Dominicans received the right of universal preaching and confession, and in 1232 the papacy entrusted them with conducting the Inquisition. They became the papacy's chief support against heresies and in its clashes with imperial authority, with local church hierarchies, with cities, and with universities. The Dominicans attributed particular importance to control by the Catholic Church in the sphere of upbringing and education; they founded their own educational institutions (in Bologna, Cologne, Oxford, etc.) and were

48. Chenu, *Toward understanding Saint Thomas*, pp. 14-15.

49. Averintsev, "Thomas Aquinas," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, pp. 559-563

50. Marie-Dominique Chenu, "Retrait au Saulchoir" [Withdrawal from Saulchoir], 1941 (Archives O.P. de France), pp. 8, 34, quoted in Potworowski, *Contemplation and incarnation*, at p. 31.

in charge of departments of theology in the universities of Paris, Padua, Prague, and elsewhere. Outstanding among the Dominicans were such prominent figures in medieval Catholicism as Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas. In the 13th century the Dominicans began to develop extensive missionary activities and founded many monasteries (for example, near Kiev, in Iran, and in China.[51]

As will be discussed below, Fr. Chenu found the integralist doctrine, where the church was liberated from enslavement to Constantine and monastic contemplation, similar to the proletarian dictatorship, where communism was the spiritual power. There was no separation of church and state.[52]

4. God

As has been discussed, Fr. Boulier, in collaborating with the communists taught the philosophical compatibility of Thomism and dialectical materialistism. He and his friends also took up collateral questions in the same collaborative manner. One of these was "God."

While some communists and anti-communists debated the question, Fr. Boulier maintained that dialectical materialist philosophy was a science. As such it could not prove or disprove the existence of God and he experienced little opposition from the Marxists concering this argument. He commented:

> *But Marxists, apart from a few rather narrow-minded sectarians, know that it cannot scientifically prove that God does not exist. In their explanation of the history of universal evolution they stick to the position of Laplace in his* System of the world*. To Napoleon, who had read the book and asked him why he had not mentioned God, Laplace replied: "Sire, I have done without this hypothesis." By this, Laplace no more than the Marxists professed atheism.*[53]

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51. Boris Ramm, "Dominicans," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 8, p. 361, online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/dominicans.

52. Marie-Dominique Chenu, *The theology of work; an exploration* (Pour une théologie du travail) (Chicago: H. Regnery Co., 1955, 1963, 1966), LCCN 66003744; p. pp. 57-61, 87; and Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the Twelfth Century:Essays on New Theological Perspectives in the Latin West*, ed. Jerome Taylor and Lester Little (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), pp. 267-269.

53. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, p. 313; see also, 265.

Where Fr. Boulier found atheism was not among the communists but among the bourgeoise. He stated, "For Christians, the only truly authentic Godless person is the worshipper of money. A heart in which God reigns, how could money reign in it?"[54]

It is also of interest that while the Marxists could not prove that God did not exist, Thomistic philosophy had little to say about God. That is, Aquinas maintained that humans did not know what God was.[55] Professor Brian Davies emphasized this in reviewing a biography about Aquinas:

I was also impressed by the way in which he brings out the seriously negative approach to God that Aquinas develops in the wake of his claim that we do not know what God is. Some readers of Aquinas do not seem to realize that he meant what he said when stating that we do not know what God is. Porro explains to such people why Aquinas meant exactly what he said.[56]

Paradoxically, as Fr. Boulier pointed out, some prominent Bolsheviks, including Anatoly Lunacharsky, Maxim Gorky and Alexander Bogdanov argued that dialectical materialism did not exclude an openness to God. He wrote:

> *Does materialism when it is dialectical, like that of Karl Marx and not mechanical, like that of Holbach, exclude all openness to God? As a left-wing Hegelian, Marx by his materialism put Hegel back on his feet. But Lunacharsky and Gorky, to Lenin's great anger, thought of using the dialectic for what they called a reconstruction of God.*[57]

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54. Jean Boulier, *A Priest Took a Stand against Cold War Anti-Communism (1948): Political Theology for Present-Day NATO Criticism* (New York: Red Star Publishers, 2022) ISBN 0-9764168-5, p. 60; originally, *Un pretre prend position* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1949), p. 67.

55. Aquinas, *Summa Theologia*, I. Q12. A7; see also, Karl Rahner, "Thomas Aquinas on the Incomprehensibility of God," *The Journal of Religion* (1978), vol. 58, pp. S107-S125, at p. S115.

56. Brian Davies, "Review of *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile* by Pasquale Porro, Joseph G. Trabbic and Roger W. Nutt, *The Catholic Historical Review* (Summer 2017), vol. 103, no. 3, pp. 575-576. For Aquinas, in apophatic (negative) philosophy, God is grasped through ultimate negation, which establishes that He is none of the things of present being. See Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: a historical and philosophical profile*, trans. Joseph G. Trabbic & Roger W. Nutt (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2016), LCCN 2015032410, 458 pp. at pp. 101, 132.

57. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, pp. 313-314.

One of the reasons the communists gave for seeking God was that atheism was not good enough. For example, a Moscow medical doctor, Vikenty Veresaev (1867-1945), stated that atheism was pessimistic and made life become meaningless. Atheism did not give the meaning that religion did – such as the promise of eternal life or that the devil had been defeated on Calvary or an answer to the Primordial Existential Question (PEQ), "Why was there something rather than nothing." For some this latter problem was more than a semantic paradox, it was an ontological problem - the contradictory nature of objective reality.[58]

Dr. Veresaev maintained that the state possessed many rituals (parades, demonstrations), but they were "depressingly untalented and miserable."[59] He noted further that communists were going to church due to disappointment in the bureaucratic indifference and poor quality of Soviet state marriages and birth-registrations. Along the same lines, a Komsomol (young communist) activist spoke up for a fellow worker whose wife had died and was buried through means of an emotionally cold and indifferent secular-communist ceremony. The worker, greatly depressed by it, consumed a full bottle of vodka while crying in tears. Lenin had claimed that religion was a kind of spiritual booze in that it acted like a drug for the working class, while this man had turned to booze in place of religion. Dr. Veresaev warned that with atheism "life would become a bore and man would turn into an empty container."[60]

For some Bolsheviks, their atheism was a problem. But for class-conscious workers in the Orthodox Renovationists and the Living Church Movements, it was the traditional church that was the problem. The Orthodox leadership had been on the side of the landlords since Peter the First (1672-1725), if not of

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58. Igor Narskii, "Hegel and Contemporary Logic," *Studies in Soviet Philosophy* (1970), vol. 8, pp. 355-373; John Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas on the Ultimate Why Question: Why is There Anything at All Rather than Nothing Whatsoever?" *The Review of Metaphysics* (January 2007), vol. 60, no. 4, pp. 731-753.

59. Dimitry V. Pospielovsky, *A history of Soviet atheism in theory and practice, and the believer* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), vol. 1, p. 92. See also, Vikenty Veresaev (Вересаев), *Ob obrjadah staryh i novyh (k hudozhestvennomu oformleniju byta*) *Об обрядах старых и новых* (к художественному оформлению быта) [About rituals old and new: (to the artistic design of everyday life)] (Moscow: Novaja Moskva [Новая Москва], 1926), 30 pp.; also in *Krasnaia nov* (Red Virgin Soil) (Jan. 1926), LCCN 49034412, no. 11, pp. 174-185.

60. Pospielovsky, *A History of Soviet Atheism*, vol. 1, p. 92. In 1965, suggestions began to appear in the Soviet press that pseudo-religious rites should be instituted that would create a mystical link between people and the promised communist society of the future, glorified in the labor of the present. The rites and services would be oriented to an utopian future promised by the Communist society. Events and days for glorifying Communism would be celebrated. Special temples with symbolic artistic ornaments would be built to glorify Communism as man's greatest achievement, with oratorios composed and performed in the temples.

Constantine (272-337 AD). Some of the Renovationists were collaborating with the Bolsheviks even before the Revolution.

One of their leaders was Archpriest Alexandr Ivanovich Vvedensky (1889-1946), who was part Suprene Church Administration (VtsU), which had been established at the All-Russian Sobor that met for the first time since the 17th century from August 1917 to September 1918. The priest-scholar, Georgy Orekhanov summarized Vvedensky's pro-communist political theology:

> *The main "sin... of the old Church," according to Vvedensky, was that it did not condemn capitalism, while "the Church must sanctify the truth of the communist revolution," for in the state sphere the Bolsheviks, as Vvedensky, wrote, "embodied the principle of social truth" and came closer than previous rulers "to the fulfillment of the covenants of Christ." Vvedensky, translating his reasoning into the political plane, called the Patriarchal Church "the fighting organ of the counterrevolution," "the church of counterrevolutionaries."*[61]

During the first years of the Soviet Revolution, some 70 percent of the Russian Federation (RSFSR) parishes took the Renovationists side.[62] Their "Red Church" adopted reforms, including the adoption of a worker-friendly liturgy that Bishop Antonin Granovsky (1865-1927) helped design. He was a monk and leader in the Petrograd Group of Progressive Clergy. The new liturgy was in the Russian vernacular and replaced Church Slavonic. It also updated the church calendar, placed the altar in the middle of the church and developed a theology to explain the changes.[63] In Moscow another progressive leader was Fr. Sergei Kalinovskii (Kalinsky) (b. 1886), pastor of Grebnevskii Lubianka Square. He sought to organize a Christian socialist party of workers and peasants.[64]

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61. Rev. Georgy Orekhanov, "Ivanovich Vvedensky," *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia* (Orthodox Encyclopedia) (Moscow: Church and Scientific Center, 2001-2017), 48 vol.; online at https://www.pravenc.ru/text/149989.html.

62. Edward Roslof, "The Heresy of 'Bolshevik' Christianity: Orthodox Rejection of Religious Reform during NEP," *Slavic Review* (Autumn 1996), vol. 55, no. 3, pp. 614-635, at pp. 320, 324; Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, "Review of *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946*," in *The Slavic and East European Journal* (Fall 2006), vol. 50, no. 3, pp. 543-545, at p. 544.

63. Edward Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905–1946* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 47.

64. *Ibid*., pp. 52, 55.

The Living Church followed the Alliance of Church Renewal (ACR) program, which came out of the 1905 Russian Revolution.[65] It set up a constitutent assembly in May 1922 and establishing a journal *Zhivaia tserkov'* (Living Church). The latter reported on the church activities around the country. Professor Roslof summarized the journal's thelogical support for the government, as set forth in a declaration that the church made "To the Believing Sons of the Orthodox church"

> *The Soviet government was established by the will of God to fight war, famine and disease in Russia. The church had stood on the sidelines during these disasters, and church leaders had actually supoted enemies of the people.*[66]

Some of the Living Church members, as Professor Young observes, belonged to the Communist Party and Komsomol, which they felt was a product and extension of their religion.[67] A 1922 list published by the Renovationists listed their goals:

> *The principle of equality, fraternity and freedom.*
>
> *The desire to generalize property.*
>
> *Equalization of the rights of clerics and laity in the management of the affairs of the community and their associations.*
>
> *Purification of Christianity from all paganism, the fight against "darkness and ignorance", identification of the causes of those phenomena by believers which which give rise to many superstitions and rituals.*
>
> *Revision of dogmatics and ethics in order to clarify the true evangelical and apostolic principles of faith and morality, obscured by medieval scholasticism and school theology.*

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65. Dimitry V. Pospielovsky, "The Renovationist Movement in the Orthodox Church in the Light of Archival Documents," *Journal of Church and State* (Winter 1997), vol. 39, no. 1, pp. 85-105, at pp. 88-89; and also his "The Renovationist Schism in the Russian Orthodox Church (NEP: Culture, Society and Politics in the the1920s)," *Russian History* (1982), vol. 9, no. 2/3, pp. 285-307, at p. 287.

66. Roslof, *Red Priests*, p. 55; the declaration appeared in *Izvestiia* on March 14, 1922.

67. Glennys Young, *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Villages* (University Park, Pa.; Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), pp. 87-92, 101-103, 244-247, 261-262, 273-278.

Purification and simplification of worship and bringing it closer to the understanding of the people.

Revision of liturgical books and menologia, the introduction of ancient Apostolic simplicity in worship, in particular, in the furnishings of churches and in the vestments of the priest, the use of the native language instead of the obligatory Slavonic.

The electability of the clergy.

The abolition of church awards.

The abolition of compulsory fees for the needs of the cult.

The elimination of "religious professionalism, that is, the separation of labor from earnings".

The revision of all church canons and the abolition of those that have lost their relevance.

Solely married ("white") episcopate.

The closure of monasteries, except of those that are based on the principle of labor and are ascetic in nature.

Special emphasis on socially useful work: "the labor principle is obligatory for all believers".

Increasing the importance of women in the Church and the introduction of the rank of deaconesses.

Broad public charity.

Ecumenical reference: "the religious-class division of hummankind into Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, etc. is the work of human hands."[68]

The Renovationists held periodical national church councils. At the October 1925 council, the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Alexandria concelebrated the eucharist with members of the Renovationist Synod.[69] To help in clerical education and ordination of peasants and workers, two institutions of higher

68. Anatoliy Levitin-Krasnov and Vadim Shavrov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoy tserkovnoy smuty. Materialy po istorii Tserkvi* (Essays on the history of the Russian church turmoil. Materials on the history of the Church) (Moscow: Krutitsy Patriarchal Metochion, 1996), book 9 (in Russian), pp. 227-230; see also, Anonymous, "Union of the Communities of the Ancient Apostolic Church," *Wikipedia*, online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_the_Communities_of_the_Ancient_Apostolic_Church.

69. Anonymous, "Renovationism," *Wikipedia*, online at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Renovationism.

learning were opened. One was the Moscow Theological Academy and the other the Theological Institute in Leningrad.[70]

In the first years of the Soviet Revolution, the Moscow Patriarch Tikhon (1865-1925) took the anti-communist side. But the Renovationist achievement persuaded him that an open struggle against the new social order, which enjoyed the support of the entire people, would destroy the influence of the traditional church among the poulation. In a letter of June 16, 1923, to the Supreme Court of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), he acknowledged his guilt, disassociated himself from counterrevolution, and requested a pardon.

Tikon's case was dismissed by a decree of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR on March 21, 1924. He then took up the traditionalist line and worked with some success to turnback the clock on the Revovationist reforms. In such situations Fr. Boulier liked to repeat Mauriac, "If humanity still has twenty thousand more years to go, we are the first Christians."[71]

It is of interest that besides the Orthodox, there were Polish and other communists in the USSR that were believers. The priest-worker Fr. Walter Ciszek, SJ, described the benefit of his Siberian ministry in connection with a fellow Polish worker, who was a Komsomol member in the laboratory where they worked the night shift during the 1950s:

> *Working with Ninja, night after night, I could actually sense the grace of God at work—in her sincerity, in her enthusiasm, and in the change which had come over her. Now she not only wanted to be baptized herself, but she wanted her three children baptized as well. Her husband, however, would be against it, she knew; he was a sincere Party man. But she begged me to do it anyway, and promised that she would bring up the children in the Faith.*[72]

Similarly, Fr. Boulier appreciated the proletariat's participation in the vernacular Mass. This was the purpose of his writing in 1975 *The New Mass:*

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70. *Ibid*.

71. Boulier, *A Priest Took a Stand*, p. 82.

72. Walter J. Ciszek, *With God in Russia: the inspiring classic account of a Catholic priest's twenty-three years in Soviet prisons and labor camps* (San Francisco: HarperOne, [1964], 2017), p. 226; see also, Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, p. 383.

Explained in Dialogues: Communist Liturgy.[73] More specifically, the intended audience was Catholic youth who were about to leave secondary school. It sought to give them a foundation for their life based on their Catholic faith, the Mass being the greatest act of their religion. As he put it, Jesus and the early Christians were communists and it was time to return the Mass to its revolutionary purpose. Leo XIII and Pius X took steps to reconnect with the proletariat. Vatican II and collaboration with the communist movement was another step.

About the revolutionary role of the liturgy, it had been part of the Soviet Renovationist program and Fr. Boulier pointed out its positive role in post-World War II China. The courageous bishops there were faithful supporters of Mao and the Communist Party and at the same time held Catholic beliefs that were irreproachable. This caused a schism for which, as Fr. Boulier put it, the Court of Rome bore full responsibility. For the believer, as Fr. Boulier taught, each Mass was a continuation and participation with Christ in the very same Death, Resurrection and Redemption of humanity in Heaven and on earth that was accomplished on Cavalry. Through the eyes of faith, the Devil was defeated on Cavalry. The early Church identified the Devil with Roman imperialism. Fr. Boulier identified NATO and anti-communism with the Devil. Participating at the Mass was a world-redeeming mystery.

In addition to religion being a source of emotional and spiritual courage, Lenin himself was concerned about another problem raised by Dr. Veresaev. Lenin complained that the Revolution had brought a curse of sexual promiscuity and Philistinism upon the Soviet Youth. He stated:

> *I don't mean to preach asceticism by my criticism. . . The changed attitude of the young people to questions of sexual life is of course based on a "principle" and a theory. Many of them call their attitude "revolutionary" and "communist". And they honestly believe that it is so. That does not impress us old people.*[74]

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73. Jean Boulier, *The New Mass: Explained in Dialogues: Communist Liturgy (1975)* (New York: Red Star Publishers, 2024), originally *La Nouvelle Messe: Expliquée en dialogues*) (Paris: Editions of L'Athanor, 1975).

74. Vladimir Lenin, as quoted in Klara Zetkin (1857-1933). *Lenin on the woman question* (New York: International publishers, 1934), 31 pp., LCCN 43017404, online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1920/lenin/zetkin1.htm; see also, Zetkin, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (New York: International Publishers, 1934), 64 pp., LCCN 34009178, p. 64 pp., at pp. 48-50, online at https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/ci/publications/Clara-Zetkin_Remembrances-of-Lenin-riaz-orig.pdf

Then Lenin went on to invoke the wisdom of his Orthodox ancestors, "Self-control, self-discipline is not slavery. . . In love two lives are concerned, and a third, a new life, arises, it is that which gives it its social interest, which gives rise to a duty towards the community."[75]

5. Ontology: Being is Good

In addition to God, a second philosophical question concerning the compatibility of Thomism and Marxism that Fr. Boulier addressed was ontology. He argued that the official church's doctrine on communism was contrary to Thomistic ontology. By way of background, in Marxist philosophy, as Soviet professor Aleksandr Ogurtsov put it, "being is regarded as matter, as an object of science."[76] In early Greek the term "ontology" meant "the study of being." The concepts the Greeks developed concerning it were later adoped by the Thomists and Marxists. The concepts included (1) actual being (act) and possible being (potency), (2) essence and existence; and (3) the form and matter principle of being.[77]

The Marxist ontologists, in discussing these concepts, argued that there was a tie and unity between ontology, epistemology and logic. The Soviet philosopher Erik Iudin (1930-1976), summarized ontology's historical and relative nature:

> *Ontology expresses a picture of the world that corresponds to a particular level in the knowledge of reality and that is recorded in a system of philosophical categories characteristic of a particular period and*

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75. *Ibid.*

76. See Aleksandr Ogurtsov, "Being," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, pp. 22-24, online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/being.

77. When the term ontology was first used in the philosophical lexicon by the German scholastic philosopher, Rudolph Goclenius in *Lexicon philosophicum quo tanquam clave philosophiae fores aperiuntur* [1613], reprint: Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1980), it was as a synonym for metaphysics and was primarily concerned with definitions of being. Professor Ogurtsov in discussing Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (III, 3, 998, 22), remarked in his *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* article, about the third concept mentioned above, the form and matter principle of being:

> *Being was understood by Aristotle as a universal predicate, which applies to all the categories… He based his thought on the principle (developed by him) of the mutual interrelationship of form and matter… Form was an inalienable characteristic of being.*

> *philosophical tradition (for example, materialism and idealism). In this sense, every philosophical and, in general, every theoretical system rests on certain ontological concepts that constitute its stable content foundation but that change as cognition develops.*[78]

One of the characteristics of Thomistic ontology, if not Marxist ontology, was, as Soviet scholar Averintsev pointed out, that "being" was good. He wrote:

> *Thomas' ontology, reflecting a characteristic of medieval philosophy in general, is value-laden; in his view, "the real and the good are interchangeable concepts." (*Summa theologiae*, 11:18.3).*[79]

Professor Ogurtsov, commented further, "Christianity developed the ancient conception of the identity of being with perfection (goodness, truth, and beauty)."[80]

Fr. Boulier, in defending both the principle that "being" was good and his communist politics, criticized Pope Pius XI, who taught in the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* (March 1937) that communism was "intrinsically perverse." Later Pius XII in July 1949, using this teaching, excommunicated all adherents to the party.[81] The excommunication prohibited any collaboration with the communists on any ground.

In response, Fr. Boulier argued that Thomism, following Augustine, taught that nothing was intrinsically evil. Fr. Boulier wrote:

> *But Satan himself is not "intrinsically perverse"! All being as being is good. "One cannot think of nothingness," says Bergson. One can think evil only as a deprivation of being. The evil of the gazelle is the good of*

78. Erik Iudin, "Ontology," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 18, p. 461, online at http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/materialism.

79. Averintsev, "Thomas Aquinas," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia,* vol. 15, pp. 559-563. Averintsev commented that medieval philosophy was value-laden. His fellow Soviet philosopher, Yuri Popov, noted from the middle of the nineteenth-century, the concept of good was replaced with the concept of value. See Popov, "Good," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 3, p. 680, online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com.

80. Ogurtsov, "Being," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, pp. 22-24.

81. Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office (approved by Pope Pius XII), The *Decree Against Communism* (1949)

> *the lion that feeds on it, the evil of cancer that destroys a human is the good of the virus that infects the person. According to this metaphysics, authentically Thomist, nothing can be "intrinsically perverse". The moralists, it is true, seek to catalog among human actions that which would be "inherently perverse." They find only blasphemy.*[82]

Fr. Boulier personally experienced the official doctrine on intrinsic evil when dealing with ecclesiastical authorities. He commented about one such encounter, "Cardinal Ottaviani said to me, 'How can you join the enemies of God?' For His Eminence, they were indeed 'intrinsically perverse.'"[83] Because of his politics, Fr. Boulier was briefly suspended from practicing as a priest in 1949 and then reinstated by his bishop. In 1950 he was sanctioned by Rome. In 1952 he was briefly reduced by Rome to the lay state. After participating in a conference in Hungary in 1962 he was again reduced to the lay state. In 1971 he was reinstated in the Parisian clergy.

Rome had an intrinsic evil doctrine, but over the years, Fr. Boulier had bishops, cardinals and laity that took his side and were sometimes able to protect him. These included Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard (1879-1949) of Paris, who, for as long as he lived, also looked out for the priest-workers and their "mission to the working class." As noted above, another friend was Msg. Roncalli in the post-war period, who told him, "You know, popes change their politics."[84]

During the 1960s the church corrected its ontological understanding of communism. Remarking on John XXIII's encyclical *Pacem in terris*, Fr. Boulier wrote:

> Pacem in terris *distinguishes in Marxism, without mentioning them, a certain number of affirmations which are radically opposed to the Christian faith. But the Encyclical explains that the Marxist movement is evolving and changing. Finally, the Christian cannot but adhere to the affirmations in conformity with the demands of the human and universal conscience taken up by communism.*[85]

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82. *Ibid*., p. 313; see also, Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia 5.1; Ia 48.2 *passim***;** Aquinas, *Questiones de malo* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 1.1 ad 1; and Augustine, *Confessions***,** VII.12.

83. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, p. 313.

84. *Ibid*., 213.

85. *Ibid*., p. 314.

6. Cosmology - Creation

In addition to God and ontology, Fr. Boulier collaborated with the communists in discussing the topic of cosmology and creation. Cosmology is a division of philosophy and in Greek means the study of the world. One of the issues it takes up is the origin of the universe. Dialectical materialism holds that since matter is primary, there is an implication that it is not created but always existed.[86] More generally, dialectical materialism follows the monist doctrine that matter is (1) infinite in space, (2) eternal in time, (3) uncreated and (4) atomistic.

Fr. Boulier agreed with the dialectical-materialist position and argued that his position was not contrary to Aquinas or scripture. After explaining in his biography how he had come by his philosophy as a young Jesuit student, he summarized about his cosmological views:

> *Thus I composed myself, without any other guide than my readings, a philosophy whose main lines have remained unchangeable for me, rather unorthodox, to tell the truth.*
>
> *The world is eternal and the matter infinite. Against the "grumblers," St. Thomas demonstrates that it is not irrational to think of an eternity of matter and that only faith teaches us that the world was drawn from nothingness and that it was its beginning. Now that we read the Bible in Hebrew - which St. Thomas did not do - we see that Chaos pre-existed the creative action.*
>
> *In the beginning that God created heaven and earth, the earth was vague and empty, the darkness covered the abyss, the spirit of God hovered over the waters. God says ... The dogma of creation from the first moment of a cosmos emerging from nothingness is only formulated with precision in the Bible at a late time and in popular language [that is reflected] in the legend of the seven brothers martyrs with their mother during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphane. Origen, with more than one Greek father, admitted an action of God exercising eternally on an eternal matter.*[87]

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86. Bonifatii M. Kedrov (1903-1985), "Materialism," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, pp. 559-563, at p. 559, online at http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/materialism. See also, B. M. Kedrov, *Problemy istorii i metodologii nauchnogo poznaniia: Sbornik sttei. Otv* [Problems of History and Methodology of Scientific Knowledge: Collection of Articles], (Editors B. M. Kedrov and N. F. Ovchinnikov, Moscow: "Nauka," 1974)

87. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, pp. 72-73. The reference to Aquinas is *De aeternitate mundi, contra murmurantes* (*On the Eternity of the World, against Grumblers*), which is available in

Fr. Boulier's position was not the traditionally Christian position on creation. The Soviet philosopher Averintsev, as mentioned earlier, was more accommodating to that position and wrote positively about Aquinas because in contrast to the idealism of Plato and his Christian followers, Aquinas, in a materialist manner, created, as he put it, a systematic order of the many within the one. From this he deduced the existence of God from the existence of things, as seen in the five proofs of the existence of God.[88]

7. Ethics

In their philosophizing with the Marxists about ethics, the social Christians used both the authority of the early Christians and Aquinas's theories such as integralism, just war and natural law. For example, Fr. Boulier maintained that the church's economic ethic from the start was communism. This was exemplified in the *Acts of the Apostles* (80-90 AD), 2:44-45 and 4:32-35 (everything in common, distribution according to need), 2 *Thessalonians* 3:10 (no work, no eat), the *Didache* (100 AD) and the Desert Fathers and Mothers (200s-400s AD), who followed Jesus' command to "be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (*Matthew* 5:48).[89] They summarized this in the three evangelical counsels: poverty, chastity and obedience.[90] American communist Milt Felsen gave the Jewish version: the Ten Commandments are communism, breaking them is capitalism.[91]

In discussing Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), Fr. Boulier described the Marxists as already having risen to the faith without knowing it. He wrote:

Mary T. Clark, *An Aquinas Reader* (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1972), pp. 178–185. The work is online, at www.logicmuseum.com/time/aquinaseternitate.htm. The woman with seven sons was a Jewish martyr described in 2 *Maccabees* 7 and other sources. The belief about everlasting life cited by the last brother is the reason Fr. Boulier cites the passage. Concerning Origen of Alexandria (184-253 AD), See John McGuckin, *The Westminster Handbook to Origen*, (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

88. Averintsev, "Thomas Aquinas," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, pp. 559-563.

89. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, pp. 326, 401-402; Boulier, *The New Mass*, pp. 89, 112; Boulier, *A Priest Took a Stand*, p. 156.

90. St. Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St. Makarios of Corinth (compilers), *The Philokalia: the complete text*, ed. G.E.H. Palmer, et al (London: Faber and Faber, 1979-1986), 3 vols., LCCN 83001426.

91. Milt Felsen, *The Anti-Warrior: A Memoir* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), p. 137.

> *But with your Utopian communists, did not you go back to the first Christians? We read in the* Doctrine of the Apostles*, the* Didache*, the oldest Christian writing, perhaps prior to the Gospels: "If you partake among yourselves as communists (*koinônôi*) the God who does not die, all the more reason to be communist with the goods that perish". Your non-Christian Utopians were thus rising, without knowing it, to the level of the faith. And why not our Marxists?*[92]

The Marxists were already Christians, according to Fr. Boulier and the monks, nuns, priest-workers and the resistors to bourgeois rule of all ages were already communists. In 1949 he summed this up:

> *Christians will therefore be good citizens of the modern city. And here it is well understood that if this city is communist, they will work with all their heart for the socialist order, such as it is proposed to them, such as it is possible for them to collaborate in the factory, in the agricultural enterprise, in the higher councils where the order is regulated.*
>
> *But if this society is bourgeois, how can Christians accept its fundamental law, the one to which all others finally give in:* make money *[in English] or, as Guizot said: get rich? "You cannot serve two masters: you cannot serve God and money" [*Mt. *6:24]... But since this bourgeois society where money is king calls itself democratic, Christian will use all the freedoms, as long as they are offered, to fight against the yoke of money and its threat.*[93]

Arguing for the same economic ethic, priest-workers in the post-war era used for authority, in addition to the early Church, the Thomistic doctrine on integralism. Aquinas set forth this principle in the treatise, *De regno*. Integralism taught that secular and spiritual power had to be united. In the

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92. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, p. 326, see also pp. 567-569. The Soviet historians Iakov Lentsman and Abram Ranovich discussed both the egalitarian philosophy of the Christian community and the transition away from this, as reflected in the *Didache*. The traveling Christian prophets, rabbis and apostles of early Christianity are shown as being replaced by professional priests and bishops. See Iakov Lentsman, *Proiskhozhdenie khristianstva* [Origins of Christianity] (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1958), pp. 164-167, 222-223; Iakov Lentsman, *Sravnivaia Evangeliia* [Comparative Gospels] (Moscow: Isd-vo Polit. Lit-ry, 1967), p. 177; and Abram Ranovich, *O rannem khristianstve* [Concerning early Christianity] (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1959), p. 60.

93. Boulier, *A Priest Took a Stand*, p. 77.

official church version, as represented by medieval popes such as Gelasius I, Gregory VII and Boniface VIII, this meant the pope was supreme. They were the government of the Italian Papal States for a thousand years up until 1870, when King Victor Emmanuel II overthrew it.

However, the social Christians, such as Fr. Chenu, turned the doctrine on its head. They used it as a tool of political-economic integration with the communists in order to make the proletariat supreme -- the reincarnation of the real Christianity of the early church.[94]

The progressive Catholic journal *La Quinzaine*, discussed the integral engagement in France on the socialist holiday, "May Day" 1953.[95] It stated that the priest-workers were justified in their complete commitment to temporal action because the workers' world should be considered as "a complete human reality," like a nation. This meant having its own Church, which differed from the existing bourgeois church and which carried over none of the traditions which were foreign to the workers' world. The priest-workers had to create new communities round them which would be as authentically proletarian as the Church in Ireland was Irish and in France was French.[96]

The priest-worker Fr. Maurice Combe, writing about the economic ethics in his socialist factory school, argued that it was practicing the gospel in a religious spirit.[97] Similarly, the focus of Fr. Chenu's ministry in the 1940s and 1950s as a Parisian Friar-worker was to help proletarian congregations that were independent of the bourgeoisie and which had their own clergy and liturgy.

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94. Chenu, *The Theology of Work*, pp. 57-61. See also, Chenu, "Le Sacerdoce des prêtres-ouvriers," *La Vie intellectuelle* (February 1954), pp. 175-181; and Sarah Elizabeth Shortall, "Soldiers of God in a Secular World: The Politics of Catholic Theology, 1905-1962" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., 2015), p. 305, online at https://dash.harvard.edu/bitstream/handle/1/23845484/SHORTALL-DISSERTATION-2015.pdf?sequence=4&isAllowed=n.

95. *La Quinzaine* was a Catholic bimonthly newspaper published by Editions du Temps présent from 1950 to 1955. Its directors were Ella Sauvageot and Jacques Chatagner. It was intended for Christian activists involved in working-class circles. It and the priest-worker movement were condemned by Pius XII because of their communist collaboration.

96. Yvon Tranvouez, "Guerre froide et progressisme chrétien: *La Quinzaine* (1950-1953)," *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire* (January-March, 1987), no. 13, pp. 83-93; see also, Tranvouez, *Catholiques et communistes. La crise du progressisme chrétien, 1950-1955* (Paris: Cerf, 2000), chs. 3, 4, 9.

97. Maurice Combe, quoted in Oscar Arnal, "A Missionary 'Main Tendue' [extended hand] toward French Communists: The 'Témoignages' of the Worker-Priests, 1943-1954," *French Historical Studies*, (Autumn 1984), vol. 13, no. 4, pp. 529-556, at p. 543.

Their apostolate was the economic ethic of the worker program.[98] The benefits of their program, as they viewed it in the socialist countries, were:

> *People were equal.*
> *Every citizen could keep a job.*
> *There was an internally stable economic system.*
> *Strong social communities were established.*
> *Competition did not exist.*
> *Efficient distribution of resources.*[99]

As set forth by Aquinas, the integralist and spiritual supremacy doctrine flowed from "natural law." The Soviet philosopher Averintsev in discussing the natural law, commented on its authority for popular revolution:

> *In his ethical teachings, Thomas Aquinas represents "natural law," which is implanted by god in the human heart, in the spirit of Aristotle's ethics; "divine law" stands above and surpasses natural law but cannot contradict it. In his treatise on kingship,* De regno*, Thomas combines the dogmas of Christianity and the doctrine of the pope's supreme authority with such Aristotelian concepts as the idea of man as a social being, the common good as a goal of the state, and morality as the middle point between the fallacy of the extremes. With some reservations, Thomas acknowledges the people's right to rise up against a tyrant who practices the perversion of justice.*[100]

Seemingly, "natural law," implanted by God in the human heart is a Platonic, not a materlialist doctrine. Whatever the case, the Soviet jurist Vladimir Tumanov (1926-2011) noted that Marxism views "a priori" natural law systems as expressions of existing economic systems. At the same time he defended the elements of truth which they contained. He wrote:

> *The Marxist materialist approach to law as a reflection of the economic order and political structure of class society makes superfluous the*

98. Chenu, *The Theology of Work,* pp. 2-3.
99. *Ibid*. 54, 75, 80, 86-87.
100. Averintsev, "Thomas Aquinas," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, pp. 559-563.

> *concept of natural law as a precondition for the existence and validity of existing law… At the same time Marxism does not consider false everything that stands behind the concept of natural law. Marxism attaches great significance to the inalienable rights of humans and citizens and, in evaluating existing law, assigns an important role to ideals and values (and justice as well), considering them, however, socially conditioned, class-bound, and historically changing, not* a priori *categories.*[101]

Revolutionary Poland was an example of where Marxists made use of natural law. The Thomistic activist Danuta Gostynska, who worked with the PAX movement, discussed the legacy of Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics*. Coming from a slave-dominated society, Aristotle denigrated work. Because of this labor had become associated with punishment for original sin. But the Poles revised Aristotle's natural law on this point: labor in their view was intended by God to be a continuation of the creation.[102]

In their interpretation of integralism, the social Christians were joined by Jacques Maritain.[103] He was not on the left, but he argued that secular forms of humanism were inevitably anti-human in that they refused to recognize the whole person. Accordingly, in his book, *Integral Humanism*, he explored the prospects for a new Christendom, rooted in philosophical pluralism, in order to find ways to inform political discourse and policy in a pluralistic age. He developed a theory of cooperation, to show how people of different intellectual positions could nevertheless cooperate to achieve common practical aims. This influenced the Christian Democratic movement.

Another ethical area of Christian-communist collaboration that paralleled the economic, was the international peace movement. This was a full-time apostolate for Fr. Boulier during and after the period he was chair of the department of Christian Principles of the Law of Nations at the Catholic University of Paris. His work involved writing, petitioning, teaching,

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101. Vladimir Tumanov, "Natural Law," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 9, p. 359; online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/natural+law.

102. Danuta Gostynska, "Wokol Zagadnien Istotnych," (Around Relevant Questions) *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 22 (May 22, 1958), p. 3; see also, Jacques Leclerq, "Perspektywy odradzajacego sie chrzescijanstwa," (Perspectives of reviving Christianity) *Tygodnik Powszechny*, no. 10 (Mar. 6, 1955), p. 1.

103. Jacques Maritain, *Integral humanism; temporal and spiritual problems of a new Christendom* [Humanisme intégral; problèmes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétiente] (New York: Scribner, 1936, 1968), 308 p. LCCN 68027781.

demonstrating and preaching at conferences throughout Europe. In 1949 he summarized that his activism was based on the thirteenth-century principles of the law of nations, which Aquinas had adopted from the Roman law concept of *ius gentium*. His mission was to apply the principles to America's atomic war policy. He wrote:

And so things are perfectly clear: Warsaw, Rome, Wroclaw, three places in the world where I had to take a stand in the conflict of forces that are fighting for the future. Faced with the threatening presence and policy of the United States, I applied to this policy the Christian principles of the law of nations which I was charged to teach. For it is not a question of stating in the abstract the law of nations of the thirteenth century, but that which our time recognizes and that to which it aspires. I do not think that an atomic policy can claim Christian principles of war and peace. So I take a stand.[104]

In 1950 Fr. Boulier helped write and promote the Stockholm Appeal to prevent nuclear war in Korea.[105] The petition gained 273 million signers, most of whom, as he pointed out, were Christians, not communists. Still later, in 1958 he was convicted of a felony for defaming the French military concerning its conduct in the Algerian War.[106]

In the early 1960s from within the peace movement during the Second Vatican Council, Fr. Boulier worked with Fr. Chenu and Cardinal Suenens to help it support peace.[107] The language in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes* ("Joy and Hope") of December 7, 1965, contained the essence of Fr. Boulier's proposed text, "Every act of war which tends indiscriminately to the destruction of entire cities or vast regions with their inhabitants is a crime against God and against man himself and it must be condemned firmly and without hesitation."[108]

8. Epistemology

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104. Boulier, *A Priest Took a Stand*, p. 7.

105. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, pp. 201-202, 228.

106. *Ibid.*, pp. 251-253; see also Boulier, *A Priest Took a Stand*, p. 96.

107. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, p. 228.

108. See Austin Flannery, OP (ed.), "Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world: Gaudium et spes, 7 December 1965," *Vatican Council II: the basic sixteen documents: constitutions, decrees, declarations* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2014), chapter 5, paragraphy 80, online at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

There is a final aspect of the social Christian collaboration with the Marxists that will be mentioned. This is epistemology, which studies the theory of knowledge and how humans can know the world. Materialists make direct experience of the world the basis of all knowledge. On the other hand, idealists (rationalists), such as Kant, argue that knowledge of the world is governed by fixed and *a priori* concepts or categories, including conceptions of' substance or causality, which structure thought or perception of reality.

Fr. Bochenski used anthropomorphic versus cosmocentric (nature) terminology to define the issue when he was defending Marxist-Leninist and Thomistic epistemology against East-European revisionism. He summarized:

> *The "revisionists" are anthropocentrist in the same category with the Kantians and the existentialists, and in sharing opposition to the clearly cosmocentric approach of the Soviets.*[109]

As mentioned above in the neo-Thomism discussion, Fr. Bochenski argued that like Aquinas, the Soviets held that humans were the highest entity in nature, but they were still a part of it.[110]

Lenin as a materialist, argued that consciousness reflected reality.[111] Similarly. Aquinas taught that in perception, the mind, or, in his words, "the soul," received the form of the world.[112] In his presentation on cognition, Fr. Brian Chrzastek, OP, who is an Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC, elaborated on Aquinas's explanation of

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109. Bochenski, "Thomism and Marxism-Leninism," p. 163

110. *Ibid*. p. 164.

111. Vladimir Lenin, *Materialism and empirio-criticism; critical comments on a reactionary philosophy* (Moscow, Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1947), LCCN 47029138; 391 p., online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1908/mec/; Siegfried Müller-Marcus and Albert Blumberg, "Soviet Philosophy in Crisis," *Cross Currents* (Winter 1964), vol. 14, no. 1, pp. 35-61, at p. 40.

112. Medieval historian Robert Pasnau noted that Aquinas's "theory of cognition was the sort that a modern materialist could love." See Pasnau, *Theories of Cognition in the Later Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 330 p., at p. 36, pp. 42-46; online at https://spot.colorado.edu/pasnau/inprint/pasnau.theories.pdf. See also, Sheldon Cohen, "St. Thomas Aquinas on the Immaterial Reception of Sensible Forms," *Philosophical Review* (1982), vol. 91, 193-209; Mortimer Adler, "Sense Cognition: Aristotle v. Aquinas," *New Scholasticism* (1968), vol. 42, pp. 578-91; and Martin Tweedale, "Origins of the Medieval Theory That Sensation is an Immaterial Reception of a Form," *Philosophical Topics* (1992), vol. 20, pp. 215-31.

how the mind receives the form of the world and how his explanation differed from Kant.[113]

As described by Fr. Chrzastek, Aquinas's explanation involved four-steps, which did not operate in a straight-line, but had switch-backs and "miraculous" complexity. In the first step of cognition, the person experienced through their sense organs the sensation of an entity which possessed an inherent essence or nature, such as a dog. Secondly, the person's brain apprehended a phantasm or mental image of the object. Thirdly was intellection. The person took the concept from the image and presented it to the passive intellect. Lastly was judgment, such as "that is a dog."

Kant's explanation paralleled that of Aquinas, but with greater complexity, which however, did not eliminate its multiple contradictions and agnosticism about the material world.

For Fr. Boulier, knowing the world included having a spiritual relationship with God. This started at a young age.[114] As a Thomist, the relationship involved the senses of both God and Fr. Boulier. Concerning senses, the Soviet philosopher and vice-president of the USSR Philosophical Society Alexander Spirkin (1918–2004) maintained that Marx took a broad view:

> *Marx pointed out that in addition to the five senses, the spiritual and practical senses (love and willpower, for example) – in a word, human emotions in general and the human nature of the sense organs – arise only because of the existence of an object for them and because nature has been humanized.*[115]

For Fr. Boulier, God the Father, not only the Son, was humanized. Prayer meant humans and God communicating with "miraculous" complexity through the senses. There was no agnosticism about the material world.

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113. Fr. Brian Chrzastek, OP, "The Nature of Knowledge and the Knowledge of Nature," (Washington, DC: The Thomistic Institute, May 15, 2020), online at https://thomisticinstitute.org/livestream-lectures/kant-and-aquinas. See also, Thomas Aquinas, *A commentary on Aristotle's De anima* [Sentencia libri De anima] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 450 p. LCCN 98035986.

114. Boulier, *I was a Red Priest*, pp. 29-31.

115. Alexander Spirkin, "Love," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (3rd Edition, 1970-1979, New York: Macmillan, 1979), vol. 15, pp. 153-156, at p. 155, online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/love. As authority, Spirkin cites K. Marx and F. Engels, *Iz rannikh proizvedenii* [From early works] (Moscow: Politizdat, 1956), LCCN 57029954, 689 pp. at p. 78. [English: K. Marx, *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2010), LCCN 75328381, vol. 1, p. 85].

Communists and social Christians shared the same epistemology and also the militant political ramifications that accompanied the theory. For example, professor Averintsev in elaborating on Aquinas's materialist epistemology, alludes to the role his doctrine had in the 13th-century evangelical movement:

> *Thomas' anthropology, which had a particularly close relation to the acute ideological conflicts of his time, is based on the notion of the human individual as a personal union of soul and body. While the soul is both immaterial and real, it is only through the body that it achieves ultimate actualization.*
>
> *Thomas defended this idea against the spiritualism of Plato and Augustine as well as against the Averroism of Siger of Brabant, with its doctrine of a single impersonal intellectual soul in all thinking creatures of the universe.*
>
> *In Thomas' view, Origen's doctrine of the essential identity of angelical and human nature was fallacious. The human soul must not simply be considered the body's "mover," but rather its essential form. This concept was resisted by Thomas' Augustinian and Franciscan opponents, until it was accepted as orthodox doctrine by the Catholic Church at a council held in Vienne in 1314.*[116]

Concerning epistemology's role in politics, Averintsev pointed out that Averroism was regarded by Aquinas as a subversion of Christian eschatology, insofar as the latter was concerned with the destiny of the human soul. The individual, in Thomas' view, was "the noblest thing in all reasoning nature" (*Summa theologiae*, 1:20.1). Averintsev explained:

> *The intellect, inasmuch as it is always an individual human intellect, is not the prime moving principle; rather, it is a part of the whole. God alone is endowed with intellect as essence, while intellect in humans is the potential of essence; thus it is not intellect which thinks—it is humans who think through the medium of the intellect. Proceeding from the premises of Christian dogma, Thomas denies the absoluteness of the intellect and views it as a part of the individual's spiritual and bodily entity; at the same time, he asserts the primacy of intellect over will. According to Thomas, reason is in its nature higher than the will—but with the reservation that,*

116. Averintsev, "Thomas Aquinas," *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*, vol. 15, pp. 559-563.

> *on the plane of human life, love of god is more important than knowledge of god.*[117]

9. Conclusion

This article has been about philosophical collaboration of social Christians and communists during the cold war. The Christians argued their dialectical materialist philosophy and related doctrines on God, cosmology, ontology, ethics and epistemology conformed both to the church's teachings and to Marxism.

117. *Ibid*.

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Beyond Adventurism: Luigi Mangione and the Revolt Against Capitalist Healthcare

Jonathan Brown[1]

Introduction

On the morning of December 5th, Brian Thompson, the wealthy CEO of UnitedHealthcare, was walking to an investor conference in New York City — reportedly to collect his substantial Christmas bonus — when he was shot and killed by a lone gunman. At the scene, police discovered three spent shell casings, each marked with the words "deny," "defend," and "depose" — a clear nod to *Delay, Deny, Defend: Why Insurance Companies Don't Pay Claims and*

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What You Can Do About It, a 2010 book that revealed how the health insurance industry systematically refuses to pay claims to maximize profits. The alleged shooter, 26-year-old Luigi Mangione, was later apprehended, and authorities recovered a manifesto in which he condemned corporate America and declared that "these parasites had it coming."[2]

Mangione's actions have since sparked a firestorm of debate, exposing the festering rage within the American working class toward an unjust healthcare system that prioritizes profit over human life. To many workers, Luigi Mangione has emerged as a folk hero — a modern-day Robin Hood who struck a symbolic blow against a system built on exploitation and suffering. While most Americans do not condone acts of vigilante violence, there is precious little sympathy for corporate executives who have enriched themselves at the expense of human lives.

How should Marxist-Leninists interpret this extraordinary moment? This essay will argue three key points. First, the American healthcare system exemplifies Friedrich Engels' concept of *social murder*, where systemic, profit-driven policies result in preventable deaths. This system is experiencing a deep crisis of legitimacy – which is why Mangione's alleged actions have resonated so strongly with the public. Second, liberal moralistic critiques of Mangione's background and beliefs reflect a *purity fetish* that attempts to stifle the growing revolutionary consciousness of the masses. Finally, while Mangione's actions express legitimate working-class frustration, Marxism-Leninism teaches that true revolution demands collective organization, not isolated acts of adventurism.

The Healthcare Industry as Social Murder

The public reaction to Brian Thompson's death laid bare the profound discontent with America's for-profit healthcare system. Social media platforms overflowed with *schadenfreude*. A Facebook post by UnitedHealthcare mourning Thompson's death, for instance, received over 90,000 laughing emojis.[3] One commenter's caustic remark — "thoughts and prayers are out of

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2. Dan Mangan, "Luigi Mangione Wrote 'These Parasites Had It Coming' in Note Found with UnitedHealthcare Murder Suspect," *CNBC* (December 10, 2024): https://www.cnbc.com/2024/12/10/luigi-mangione-unitedhealthcare-ceo-murder-manifesto-parasites.html

3. David Moye, "UnitedHealthcare's Facebook Post About Slain CEO Flooded With 'Haha' Reactions," *Huffpost* (December 9, 2024): https://www.huffpost.com/entry/unitedhealthcare-ceo-tribute-mocked-laughing-emojis_n_67534f84e4b0ced7879807a7

network" — perfectly captured the working-class's deep cynicism and anger toward a system that denies care to those who need it most. The corporate media, unable to comprehend this response, clutched its pearls. "A man was murdered in cold blood, and you're laughing?" Jia Tolentino asked in *The New Yorker*. "Are we really so divided, so used to dehumanizing one another, that people are out here openly celebrating the death of a hardworking family man?"[4]

To the American working class, Brian Thompson was not a "hardworking family man" but a bloodthirsty parasite who profited from human misery. As CEO of UnitedHealthcare — one of the nation's largest health insurance conglomerates — Thompson oversaw a business model rooted in the systemic denial of care. In 2023 alone, UnitedHealthcare reported $281 billion in revenue, while Thompson personally received a $10 million salary. [5] Under his leadership, the company introduced policies that denied coverage for "non-critical" emergency room visits, forcing patients to gamble on whether their symptoms warranted treatment. Thompson also oversaw the use of artificial intelligence systems to automate claims denials, accelerating rejections while boosting corporate profits. His tenure epitomized the free-market logic of healthcare as a commodity: profits for a few, suffering for the many.

These failures extend far beyond Thompson or UnitedHealthcare; they reflect the inherent contradictions in the capitalist approach to healthcare as a whole. Despite spending more per capita on healthcare than any other nation, nearly 26 million Americans remain uninsured, and 45,000 die annually from preventable illnesses.[6] For those "fortunate" enough to have insurance, crushing medical debt is commonplace: Americans owe $220 billion in medical debt, with over three million burdened by debts exceeding $10,000.[7] Despite decades of debate by US politicians about various healthcare reform measures, America's

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4. Jia Tolentino, "What the Murder of the UnitedHealthcare C.E.O. Means to America," *The New Yorker* (December 7, 2024): https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-lede/what-the-murder-of-the-unitedhealthcare-ceo-brian-thompson-means-to-america

5. Adam Geller and Tom Murphy, "UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson Kept a Low Profile. Then He Was Shot." *AP News* (December 4, 2024): https://apnews.com/article/united-healthcare-ceo-new-york-shooting-brian-thompson-8a130e64bcab749d1a085f5a34ab8254

6. Michael Sainato, "The Americans Dying Because They Can't Afford Medical Care," *The Guardian* (January 7, 2020): https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jan/07/americans-healthcare-medical-costs

7. Shameek Rakshit, Matthew Rae, et. al., "The Burden of Medical Debt in the United States." *KFF* (February 12, 2024): https://www.kff.org/health-costs/issue-brief/the-burden-of-medical-debt-in-the-united-states/

privatized system remains an unfortunate outlier among advanced industrialized nations.

The grim statistics of suffering and death brought about by the American healthcare system evoke Friedrich Engels' concept of *social murder*, introduced in his 1845 exposé of industrial capitalism, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Engels used the term to describe systemic, preventable deaths that arise not from individual acts of violence, but from the deliberate policies of the capitalist class. These deaths, Engels argued, are not accidental but are an inevitable consequence of a system that places profit above human life. He wrote:

> "When society places hundreds of proletarians in such a position that they inevitably meet a too early and an unnatural death... it commits a crime as surely as does the single individual who puts a knife to another's throat."[8]

This concept remains as relevant today as it was in Engels' time. CEOs like Brian Thompson preside over a healthcare system that knowingly denies care, leaving millions to suffer preventable illness, injury, and premature death. Their policies are no less violent than an individual act of murder, yet these CEOs are celebrated as "innovators" and "leaders" while their victims are treated as collateral damage. The capitalist system's defenders would have us believe that Mangione is the criminal, but the American people are beginning to recognize that the greater crime lies in the systemic violence of *social murder* perpetuated by the ruling class.

The Problem of the Purity Fetish

While Luigi Mangione has been celebrated as a populist hero, liberal media outlets have predictably sought to discredit him by scrutinizing his personal background and beliefs, holding him to an impossible standard of perfection. The *New York Times* fixated on Mangione's "privileged background," emphasizing his upper-class upbringing, status as a high school valedictorian, and Ivy League education – as though these factors invalidate his grievances

8. Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 106.

against the healthcare industry.[9] Similarly, feminist commentator Jill Filipovic trivialized Mangione's popularity, claiming it stems from his "six-pack abs, gloriously thick eyebrows, and million-dollar smile," reducing legitimate working-class solidarity to sexual objectification.[10] Several commentators combed through Mangione's social media presence for evidence of "wrongthink," leading prominent democratic-socialist Nathan J. Robinson to lament Mangione's "lack of traditional left-wing views" and ignorance of socialist and communist literature — as if familiarity with Marxist texts were a prerequisite for expressing justified rage against capitalism.[11] Yet perhaps the most asinine critique came from MSNBC's Ja'han Jones, who equated public support for Mangione with the "hero worship of white killers," and bizarrely compared Mangione to serial killer Ted Bundy.[12]

These criticisms exemplify what philosopher Carlos L. Garrido terms the "purity fetish" — an obsession with ideological perfection that undermines revolutionary consciousness and stifles potential for meaningful action.[13] The widespread support for Luigi Mangione is not simply about one man; it signals a growing crisis of legitimacy, not just for the healthcare industry, but for capitalism as a whole. Large segments of the American public have lost faith in the institutions of bourgeois society, and the ruling class is increasingly unable to maintain its grip on the status quo. In such moments, liberals serve as gatekeepers of capitalist hegemony, wielding ideological purity tests to disarm and paralyze revolutionary momentum. Rather than acknowledging Mangione's actions as a reflection of profound systemic anger, these critiques deflect attention from the healthcare industry's inherent brutality and work to protect capitalist interests. Only through the leadership of a disciplined Communist Party can the discontent of the masses be transformed into a coherent revolutionary force capable of overthrowing the system. To achieve

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9. Corey Kilgannon, Mike Baker, et. al., "Suspect in C.E.O. Killing Withdrew from a Life of Privilege and Promise," *New York Times* (December 11, 2024): https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/09nyregion/united-healthcare-ceo-shooting-luigi-mangione.html

10. Jill Filipovic, "Are Americans Hot for Luigi Mangione, or Heated Over Their Health Care?" *The Daily Beast* (December 12, 2024): https://www.thedailybeast.com/are-americans-hot-for-luigi-mangione-or-heated-over-their-healthcare/

11. Nathan J. Robinson, "The UnitedHealthcare Shooter Needed a Social Movement," *Current Affairs* (December 12, 2024): https://www.currentaffairs.org/news/the-unitedhealthcare-shooter-needed-a-social-movement

12. Ja'han Jones, "Hero Worship for Luigi Mangione and Daniel Penny Exposes America's Problem with Vigilantes," *MSNBC* (December 11, 2024): https://www.msnbc.com/the-reidout/reidout-blog/luigi-mangione-daniel-penny-vigilante-hero-worship-rcna183825

13. Carlos L. Garrido, *The Purity Fetish and the Crisis of Western Marxism* (Dubuque: Midwestern Marx Publishing Press, 2023), 3

this, we must reject the ideological puritanism that divides and disempowers the working class, and instead unite behind the shared goal of revolutionary change.

The Limits of Adventurism

While Marxist-Leninists reject liberal attempts to discredit Mangione, we also recognize the limitations of individual acts of violence. Individual actions, however heroic, risk falling into *substitutionism* — where the deeds of a lone individual are mistakenly seen as a replacement for the necessary work of building a revolutionary movement. As V.I. Lenin argued in his 1902 essay *Revolutionary Adventurism*, collective action and disciplined organization is a more powerful force than the isolated acts of lone individuals.[14] In a society saturated with myths of the lone hero — perpetuated by Hollywood's endless parade of superhero narratives — this caution is more urgent than ever. While acts like Mangione's can bring attention to systemic injustice, they cannot replace the hard, patient work of constructing a revolutionary party. Surrendering to petty-bourgeois impulses that elevate individual violence over organized struggle runs the risk of undermining the goal of building a truly collective, class-conscious movement capable of overthrowing capitalism.

Conclusion

Luigi Mangione's alleged killing of Brian Thompson reflects a profound crisis of legitimacy within capitalism. His actions, born from a justified rage against systemic social murder, resonated deeply with the working class. As committed Marxist-Leninists, we must reject the liberal critics that seek to discredit Mangione — whether by fixating on his "imperfect" ideology or his "privileged" background. These critiques, rooted in puritanical moralism, serve only to paralyze the masses and shield the capitalist class from accountability for its crimes. At the same time, we understand the limits of individual acts of violence. While such actions may expose systemic injustices and galvanize public discontent, they cannot substitute for the organized, collective struggle necessary to overthrow capitalism. The task before us is clear: to build a legitimate Communist Party capable of uniting the working class, channeling mass discontent, and leading the fight to overthrow the capitalist system. Only

14. Vladimir I. Lenin, "Revolutionary Adventurism," *Marxists Internet Archive* (September 1, 1902): https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1902/sep/01.htm

through organized, disciplined struggle can we dismantle this regime and replace it with a system that prioritizes human life over corporate profit.

6

On the Bigfoot Question: The Nature of Humanity as Proof of Dialectical Logic

Noah Khrachvik[1]

Introduction: Objective Truth and the Question of Humanity

What makes us human? What separates us from the animal kingdom? Or the plant kingdom, for that matter. Or any other kingdom you could think of? What about humanity gives us that humanity? Is it some characteristic we have? Thought, maybe? If it's thought, where does that thought come from? If it's a characteristic, which one? Why do we even think about ourselves as humans separately from nature, anyway? Can we even be sure that we're not just another animal, mechanistically doing what any animal does, but in some unique form? These are questions philosophers have been asking themselves and trying to answer since before the word "philosophy" even came around.

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Even in ancient times, before we had bodies of knowledge that we categorized into different disciplines, human beings looked at the natural world around them, at the stars above them, and thought about these things, developing entire religions and customs around them. And it's moved forward from there. Pre-Marxist logic, for example, often looked at the question as one of common sense. Man is man. A = A, and can't be anything but A. All you really need to do to figure out what "humanity" or "man" is would be to look at those characteristics that are present within every single individual within the classification without exception and add them up, or to look at those characteristics that are present within these individuals and no others, and then compare them. It's only when we start going a little deeper than elementary observations that problems begin to come up. What living beings are we going to include here in the first place? Believe it or not, this was not always something that seemed readily apparent to us. Some of the greatest philosophers in the history of society believed that some human beings were more… human than others. Aristotle didn't take slaves into account when he called man a political being, for instance. For Aristotle, only the actions of a free citizen could truly be considered human.

Way back in the oldy timey times, before even the enlightenment, Descartes' famous reduction, "I think, therefore I am," made sense. The notion that all I can know without doubt, when we strip everything away and begin at the beginning, is that I am a thinking being. That I am having this thought. Outside of that? It's anyone's guess. We may all live in a giant potato. Who knows. We have to go onwards from there and check and see what else we can't doubt. (Okay, so I added the potato bit myself - that is not part of what Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin called 'the Cartesian Reduction.' But you get the point, right?)[2] The postmodernists don't believe we can ever answer such a question, as they don't believe we can even find objective truth. For them, all of the various "truths" we see are only subjective illusions, an infinitely expanding world of competing narratives - what is real for me is not necessarily real for you. So your conception of 'humanity' may be far different from mine, and who's right? Well, both of us. Neither of us. It's all the same, really. Maybe your potato and mine are different potatoes, and those potatoes are real for both of us.

Potato worlds aside, though, the weirder sounding modern-day philosophical schools are not the only ones who think this. From Bishop Berkley to the

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2. Richard Levins, Richard Lewontin. *The Dialectical Biologist.* (Harvard University Press, 1985).

Machists of the early 20th century, many forms of idealist philosophy throughout history have dealt with the nature of truth in such a way. And if we do not have objective truth that is outside ourselves, then we cannot ever know if our understanding of humanity is correct or not. So let's get that squared away real quick.

JV Stalin, who was a far deeper thinker than the Western bourgeois academic "Marxists"[3] and postmodernists will ever tell you, says in his short primer, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism:*

> *Contrary to idealism, which denies the possibility of knowing the world and its laws, which does not believe in the authenticity of our knowledge, does not recognize objective truth, and holds that the world is full of "things-in-themselves" that can never be known to science, Marxist philosophical materialism holds that the world and its laws are fully knowable, that our knowledge of the laws of nature, tested by experiment and practice, is authentic knowledge having the validity of objective truth, and that there are no things in the world which are unknowable, but only things which are as yet not known, but which will be disclosed and made known by the efforts of science and practice.*[4]

He goes on to tell us in brief why that is, but the explanation really comes from Frederick Engels, who criticized Kant's attempt to state that objective truths were unknowable to us, expanding on Hegel's insight that there is a connection between the world of thoughts within our minds and the material reality existing outside of that sphere. He said:

> *The most telling refutation of this as of all other philosophical crotchets is practice, namely, experiment and industry. If we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural process by making it ourselves, bringing it into being out of its conditions and making it serve our own purposes into the bargain, then there is an end to the Kantian ungraspable 'thing-in-itself.' The chemical substances produced in the bodies of plants and animals remained such 'things-in-themselves' until organic chemistry*

3. I refuse to call these people Marxists. They are, to their core, anti-Marxist, and their worldview is anti-Marxist through and through. But that's a story for another time and place. Or, what I call "a whole nother bag of bananas."

4. Joseph Stalin. *Dialectical and Historical Materialism.* (International Publishers, 1972), 8-9.

> *began to produce them one after another, whereupon the 'thing-in-itself' became a thing for us, as, for instance, alizarin, the coloring matter of the madder, which we no longer trouble to grow ill the madder roots in the field, but produce much more cheaply and simply from coal tar. For 300 years the Copernican solar system was a hypothesis with a hundred, a thousand or ten thousand chances to one in its favor, but still always a hypothesis. But when Leverrier, by means of the data provided by this system, not only deduced the necessity of the existence of an unknown planet, but also calculated the position in the heavens which this planet must necessarily occupy, and when Galle really found this planet, the Copernican system was proved.*[5]

Or, to put it a little more simply: the practice of theory within the real world is proof of objective truth within that theory. Engels tells us that, as we develop the scientific knowledge to understand the coloring within the "madder" root, we make it a thing for ourselves at that point. We interact with that real world, change it, and make it work for us. From then on, we can make the same thing much more cheaply and easily by theoretically understanding other aspects of the world around us. Without the theoretical and practical experience of, say, medical technology, and the ability to perform heart transplant procedures, my mother would have died a very long time ago. Because these physical laws are not things-in-themselves, unknowable to the doctors who operated on her, however, her life was saved and she has been kicking asses and taking names since then, and that was more than thirty years ago.

And so Marxism says that of course we can have objective truth, and that the truths we discover are objective truths. And this is precisely what we need in order to answer any question, really, not just the one about ourselves as human beings. Without objective truths, all of our philosophical pondering is nothing more than navel gazing and mental masturbation, guesses about what is that can never be verified. This essay is an attempt to cut through all that nonsense and to state a fact we often take as a dogma through the posing of one question alone.

What is a human?

Asking this question and attempting to answer it can only lead to one solution: in order to even begin trying to answer it without ending up hopelessly trapped

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5. Frederick Engels. *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy.* (Progress Publishers, 1946), 16.

in circular logic, or already having a preconceived abstract notion of 'human being' as separate from the rest of the living world, reducing us to the counting of fully formed characteristics without understanding how they relate or became what they are, or vulgar idealism, we must apply the dialectical form of logic.

Or, a little more simply: in order to genuinely ask the question, "what is humanity," with the intent of arriving at an answer and not just circling endlessly around conclusions that are also our premises (which sounds exhausting, frankly), we must:

- understand that truths are objective, and outside of ourselves.
- think developmentally, and understand how things get from A to B.
- have a scientific method of investigation whereby we can understand development and processes, and properly denote elementary sensual observations from the rational stage of cognition that begins after this observation, going step by step from the end to the beginning and beginning to end at once.[6]
- In doing this, we must understand that ends are only beginnings and beginnings are always ends. Cause and effect are constantly changing places through the course of a thing's development, and that the premise of all things is development. Discovering how that development happens is the key to objective and scientific knowledge of that thing.

Or: we must have dialectical logic. More, we must have dialectical logic that is based on a firm, materialist foundation, with any mystical trappings of idealism stripped from it and revealing both its correct internal formation and its correct reflection of the material world.

Or, a little more simply: we must have Marxism.

In order to do this, we're going to talk about Bigfoot.

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6. We begin with observing a thing in reality - say, a bag of bananas. This is where its development has gotten to, the end. In order to understand how it got to that end, we must begin our abstract theorizing by looking at how it became this particular bag of bananas. We must understand how the paper the bag is made of became that paper, and how the bananas inside it were put inside it. By starting at the end and abstracting to the beginning, we recreate a concrete representation of the processes that begat this bag of bananas in our minds.

That's right. Fucking Bigfoot.

Bigfoot, the American Northwest, and the Reign of the Sasquatch

If you're not from the USA, or you're unfamiliar with American pop culture from the 20th century, you may be asking yourself at the moment what a Bigfoot is. They're called different things in different times and places. Yetis, for instance. Or 'the abominable snowman' when they're in the snow. Sasquatches. The Missing Link. Basically, they are mythical creatures (or are they real creatures?[7]) who lie somewhere between the world of apes from which we are descended and the modern human being. There are, in fact, ancient histories with tales of such beings - part ape, part man. Some of them are peaceful, and some of them are vicious monsters, depending on the story. Regardless of the type, though, they are always particularly interesting for us humans. Such fantastical tales have been a staple of the zeitgeist for ages. And once mass media had been established, whooo boy. The imaginations of millions were captivated seemingly overnight by stories of "*Bigfoot*", hiding somewhere in the dense forests of the American northwest, or high in the Andes or Himalayas. "Sightings" popped up by the hundred, and the corporations began to cash in. Even the rednecks got into the spirit of things, with monster truck rallies featuring a car-crushing, gas guzzling, drunk-redneck-cheer-creation-machine named after the ape-monster of legend. I cannot tell you how many "Bigfoot" toys I had as a kid, but it was a lot.

For our purposes here, though, we are going to take things a little more seriously, and focus on the missing link version, rather than the big truck that crushes cars for our entertainment. And we are going to ask ourselves a question.

What if Bigfoot was actually discovered?

What if our technology, advanced as it is, was able to use thermal imaging to discover a whole bunch of Bigfoots? (Or is it Bigfeet? I'm not sure how to pluralize this one. I like Bigfoots. We're gonna go with Bigfoots.) What if some logging company was blowing their way through our pristine forests,

7. Cue trombone slide noise or rim shot here, whichever you'd prefer.

destroying the natural landscape and ecosystem to make a few bucks, and they discovered this previously mysterious and reclusive “missing link”?

What would this do to our society?

What debates would it bring up?

How would we view such a creature? And what would various sections of our society say about it?

I’ll tell you the first thing that would happen. Libertarians the world over would tell us that they can’t possibly have any connection to humans, because they live communally and don’t have Bigfoot mega-corporations or conglomerates, which is apparently considered ‘human nature’ in such circles, a priori. (Such is the degeneration/vulgarization of liberal thought in the 21st century. Don’t yell at me about it. I’m not the one who did that. And I’ve got enough on my plate trying to help undo the damage done to Marxism, anyway. The libertarians can try to combat that one if they want.) As we try to discover less humorous ways of categorizing our Bigfoots, though, let’s lay out a few things we’ll discover about them as the question materializes in the minds of humanity and becomes front page news, as most of us won’t come to such silly conclusions immediately.

Let’s just stay as close as we can to all the myths and legends. Our Bigfoots live very similar lives to apes, in large family or clan-like groups, and that they have a very primitive ability to engage in what might be considered language if we stretch the concept of language a little bit - guttural growls, yips with some precision, and gestures; that sort of thing. Apes, already, are taught sign language all the time, so I think this is a fair one to give them. Let’s say they’re not so advanced as to wear clothes, but they obviously mate and then bond with their immediate families; they are distinct individuals. Let’s say they have leisure time of a sort, have something between an ape paw and a human hand, and a pretty ape-like hierarchy within their large family units. This seems a fair in-between, if we’re going to try to be true to the general notion of what these guys are within pop culture. They’re a missing link, right? Somewhere on the evolutionary scale between us and our forebears. They’re much larger than us humans, with more natural lean muscle mass, fur all over, and (I apologize in advance for the dad joke) big feet.

These are our Bigfoots. And they’re scared to utter bejesus of the drones we initially keep flying towards their little hidey-hole communities in the forest in

order to try to study them without interfering with their natural ecological state while we make up our minds about what to do now that we know they're real. They throw rocks at the drones with amazing strength, and use the pieces in primitive not-quite-tools sometimes, and other times, they just leave the mess where it was, provided it was outside of the area they consider their territory.

I think this is a good starting place.

Let's see where it takes us.

The Debates: Is Bigfoot Man or Animal?

One would think we could simply view Bigfoots for what they are when they're discovered, and study them in order to try to figure out a deeper view of what we are as humanity, and where we come from. But their existence would immediately bring up certain problems. Vercors, a progressive French novelist known for his wit and ability to put such big questions into fictional situations with grace, wrote about just such things in his 1953 novel *You Shall Know Them* (which is actually part of the inspiration for this paper). He told the story of a similar creature being discovered on an expedition into previously undiscovered wilderness. This sparks all sorts of debates which increase in depth and philosophical perspective as the story goes on. The protagonist ends up forcing the issue when he kills one of them, prompting the need for immediate answers to the questions their existence brought up. Is he a murderer, who must be sentenced based on this crime he committed? Or has he only killed an animal, in which case such a charge would be ridiculous?

We will not go so far as to kill any imaginary Bigfoots in order to get to the root of this question, but we are going to delve into the questions it must lead us to when trying to decide whether or not these Bigfoots are sentient (or similar to humans) or if they are mere animals. In this way, we will arrive at the conclusion that the only proper way to even ask the question is to approach it through dialectical and not metaphysical logic.

Remember our logging company that initially discovered our Bigfoots? Well, in order to be logging there, they would have to own the land on which the Bigfoots were residing, wouldn't they? And if we are to apply the laws of whatever country this may be (let's use the USA, since that's where we are),

then what they do with their land is their business. If the Bigfoots are considered animals, they could be the perfect beast of burden for this company, as they could then be considered the private property of the logging company. After all, Bigfoots do not have class consciousness or even antagonistic relations of production. They do not form labor unions, and they do not form Communist Parties. They do not ask for wage increases, or even understand what a wage is. One Bigfoot could get the work of many humans done in a fraction of the time, especially as it relates to carrying heavy loads, clearing forests, etc. If these missing links were to be captured and used as a labor force, this would be a giant boon not just for our particular, individual logging company, but for those capitalists in need of such labor all over the world, and our logging company would be able to sell these "animals" to others and profit from the sales. This has happened even with human beings in the real world, during the era of chattel slavery. In fact, this was what Vercors was mainly dealing with in his novel, the effects of this chattel slavery on the human psyche, and the way it affected our social consciousness. In fact, the analogy is far more apt than one might think, if one is not aware of the deeper history of this institution being the central driving factor in the creation of a concept of "race" among humans, and entire schools of objectively wrong "scientific" inquiry that they used to call *race science.*

In the modern day, socialist musician/screen-writer Boots Riley explored the notion of a mega-corporation creating creatures to use in such a manner in his 2018 film, *Sorry to Bother You,* where the hero was tricked into taking a drug that mutated him into a horse-person, so that he could be a liaison between these things considered slaves/animals and the mega-corporation. (It doesn't exactly end up well for the Jeff Bezos-like character in charge of the mega-corporation, however, as the hero instead begins to organize the other horse-people who had been victims of the drug and starts a revolution.)

What Vercors and Riley are both doing here is commenting on the dehumanization that is inherent within subjective decisions made a priori based on how ruling classes must perceive subjects, and how they must reduce people to less than human status in order to justify their inhuman treatment. This is the entire pseudo-science they used to call "race science." The effect of this institution creates the social reality of race and race relations, which then becomes the cause of the system going forward from there.

Another character from Vercors's novel is an old clergyman, who wrestles with the question based on the need to either baptize them and save their souls if

they are to be considered human, or to do this in error and commit blasphemy if they are considered animals. He has a more open-ended incentive, of course, but finds himself compelled to notice that it is the distinction made at the outset of asking the question that determines whether they are human or animal. If they are human, then he must attempt to save their souls. If they are animals, he is breaking a very serious law of his religion, but since one must be trying to prove a conclusion as one even asks the question, he's left in a pickle. How does he decide? If he takes them as human, and baptizes them, then it is their immortal souls he is worried about. It is, after all, this immortal soul that makes one truly human for the faithful of his religion. But if he bases his view of what is human on the presence of said immortal soul, then he's already decided before he asks the question.

According to biologists who apply the Darwinian theory of evolution, humanity is the result of that same mechanical function, evolution. Humans are those who have evolved into what we see as human today, regardless of the consideration of the soul. We are the product of a mechanism that has led us to be precisely what we are, having adapted ourselves from a previous form according to the environment around us. Interestingly, it is held back only by its mechanistic form of thought. They observe, just as the religious do, that humanity at present can think and speak, and they can engage in labor, changing the natural world around them to suit the form of thought they have within their minds and serve their purposes. But they do not add the reciprocal relation that the Marxist point of view does, that humans are necessarily changing our environments as our environments change us. They do not add the effect becoming cause. They are, unfortunately, stuck in metaphysics.

On the surface, all metaphysical logic seems like common sense. A=A, right? And these are certainly not A. They're B. But when we dig down under that surface level, sensual observation, well… what do we call *thought*? What is *speech*, or a *soul*? If we are to seriously consider whether or not this Bigfoot should be a beast of burden for our logging company, or considered a sentient creature in its own right, then these are questions that *need* answers.

For the Marxist view, labor is the beginning of what makes us thinking beings, and our essential nature as humanity. Stripped down to a simple definition, and the core of what develops everything else about humans, we can say that humans are beings that produce instruments of labor and means of production. It was the need, after all, to perform labor that began the development of our thumbs, and coordination of such our speech. But what is labor? What is

production? Is it defined as working in a factory to produce a commodity and surplus value like so many people who call themselves Marxists will tell us today? Or can we say that banging a rock against a tree with the strength of a Bigfoot in order to knock it over on behalf of a logging company is labor? Is pouring a cup of coffee labor if we're selling that coffee for a company, rather than drinking it ourselves? Is it still labor if we drink it ourselves? When we think of these things, are we thinking of them as static states of being, devoid of development and how they came to be what they are? Are we working backwards from an already pre-defined view of what *labor* or *production* is and holding what happens in the real world up to that view? If so, are we even engaged in the Marxist view of labor?

Again - we must have concrete answers to these questions.

But it seems that posing the questions themselves ends up giving us the same problems that Vercors's priest had. Depending on which category or quality we determine makes them human or animal, there is already the determination of whether they qualify or not. If we begin adding up qualities our previously existing humans already have that the Bigfoot does not, then we are specifically leaving our Bigfoots out of the category, and we again have already made up our minds before we ask the question. Likewise, if we begin with categories they both have, then we have already made up our minds in the opposite direction.

Or, a little more simply: We always end up choosing those categories to define "human" that already include or exclude Bigfoots. This is the philosophical flaw in all metaphysical thinking. The counting of characteristics, in one way or another, to "define" a given thing must therefore reduce it to a static state of being at the very least.

So let's say our logging company is asking these questions. In order to define the Bigfoots as animals and use them as beasts of burden, they must already have a specific form of speech in mind that will qualify as 'speech' before even posing the question. And so, for our logging company, 'speech' becomes only the equivalent of modern language. The guttural sounds our Bigfoots make when "speaking" to each other obviously cannot count. The premise is baked into the conclusion. We can't get an answer that way.

What if our logging company has some people who've read Marx in it, and they decide that it is labor that makes something human. What can we say about

“labor”? Is a draft horse pulling a plow on an oldy timey farm engaged in labor? Only human beings have the ability to observe nature, then hold up an image of changed nature in our minds, and then interact with the material world outside of that image in order to change it and make it more closely resemble the image. So, maybe it is purposeful labor that we are dealing with. Can we say our Bigfoots are doing this when we are training them to use rocks to knock over trees? Again, here, the logging company must already have a qualifier of what constitutes labor and is therefore human in their minds in order to arrive at a solution. As must any detractors. From both sides of this question, we see only circular logic. If we consider ‘labor’ to only be that which we described above, then we already know whether the Bigfoots are human or not before we even ask the question. We’re operating backwards from a conclusion and trying to prove it.

In fact, this was Vercors’s final view, that it is always a foregone conclusion. Therefore, what is considered ‘human’ is whatever the powerful within society, those with the ability to disseminate their view as they wish, want to call it. As we see above, asking these questions results only in already having the notion of what qualifies as ‘human’ within our minds, and our reduction to vulgar materialism. And the notion that the ruling class defines objective reality is only more of the same. Their view is is not, in fact, reflective of objective reality outside their minds. This is not an objective truth. It is, instead, a subjective narrative that must ignore its own premises in order to arrive at its conclusions. Just as it was with so-called “race science.”

The Answer to the Bigfoot Question

The Marxist view of concrete humanity, of man, takes development as its premise, rather than focusing on some set in stone characteristics that end up in circular logic and working backwards from a conclusion. Humanity is its own development. It is an on-going process. What is Marxism, after all, other than a science through which we seek to understand how things develop the way they do? For Marxism, $A \neq A$. Instead, A is B. Or, rather, A is becoming B, which is the determinate form A took on, and where B can give us a clue to genuinely concretely understanding A, shaping our concrete concept of the whole as a moment of rational cognition. Every part of the whole must come together to form our concept. For Marxism, therefore, the essence of man cannot be found as some abstract characteristic inherent in each single individual, or by

comparing abstractions from individuals. We must, instead, understand all of the characteristics not according to what they are, or their being, but instead according to how they came to be that way and how they interact with each other, or their becoming. It is, as Marx tells us rather plainly in his theses on Feuerbach, the "ensemble of the social relations," which we cannot arrive at without this form of developmental logic, without ascending through our abstractions and into the concrete totality, the ensemble.

And so, for Marxism, we must take a look at the beginning of that development.

Engels's Answer to The Bigfoot Question

Engels teaches us this lesson in *Anti-Duhring*, where he describes the metaphysical mode of thought and contrasts it to the dialectical view in the most succinct manner I've ever seen, which can begin to really concretize our view of the Bigfoot. He says:

> *To the metaphysician, things and their mental reflexes, ideas, are isolated, are to be considered one after the other and apart from each other, are objects of investigation fixed, rigid, given once for all. He thinks in absolutely irreconcilable antitheses. "His communication is 'yea, yea; nay, nay'; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.*[8] *For him a thing either exists or does not exist; a thing cannot at the same time be itself and something else. Positive and negative absolutely exclude one another, cause and effect stand in a rigid antithesis one to the other.*
>
> *At first sight this mode of thinking seems to us very luminous, because it is that of so-called sound common sense.*[9] *Only sound common sense, respectable fellow that he is, in the homely realm of his own four walls, has very wonderful adventures directly he ventures out into the wide world of research. And the metaphysical mode of thought, justifiable and even necessary as it is in a number of domains whose extent varies according to the nature of the particular object of investigation, sooner or later reaches a limit, beyond which it becomes one-sided, restricted, abstract, lost in*

8. Engels is here quoting a Bible verse, Matthew 5: 37, which is noted in the original text. Figured I'd let you guys know too, as it's a pretty interesting verse in its own right and Engels did nothing without reason. Here, he is saying their thinking is dogmatic to the point of being religious, while using the Bible itself and the context this is within to prove the point.

9. Sound familiar? What did we say at the beginning?

> *insoluble contradictions. In the contemplation of individual things it forgets the connection between them; in the contemplation of their existence, it forgets the beginning and end of that existence; of their repose, it forgets their motion. It cannot see the wood for the trees.*
>
> *For everyday purposes we know and can say, e.g., whether an animal is alive or not. But, upon closer inquiry, we find that this is, in many cases, a very complex question, as the jurists know very well. They have cudgeled their brains in vain to discover a rational limit beyond which the killing of the child in its mother's womb is murder. It is just as impossible to determine absolutely the moment of death, for physiology proves that death is not an instantaneous momentary phenomenon, but a very protracted process.*
>
> *In like manner, every organic being is every moment the same and not the same, every moment it assimilates matter supplied from without, and gets rid of other matter; every moment some cells of its body die and others build themselves anew; in a longer or shorter time the matter of its body is completely renewed, and is replaced by other atoms of matter, so that every organic being is always itself, and yet something other than itself.*[10]

Or, a little more simply, everything is always in an unending process of development and developing. There is no such thing as pure being, after all. All being is becoming. And more, that becoming is a determinate becoming, based on what is already in place.

Or, even a little more simply: $A \neq A$.

Marx's Answer to The Bigfoot Question

Marx can give us some insight into The Bigfoot Question as well, and help us further concretize our conception. In his *The Grundrisse*, a collection of his notebooks and notes that were mostly to himself, he says very plainly that, "Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape." Now, on its own, and immediately apparent to us, this sentence means very little. It's just a statement. We can believe or disbelieve it. Agree or disagree. When we begin to think a little more deeply, and apply the lesson from Engels above, we can

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10. Frederick Engels. Anti-Duhring - Herr Eugen Duhring's Revolution in Science. (Progress Publishers, 1947), 13-14.

see that it is more profound than we first thought. Obviously, though, Marx was not relying on a book by Engels to make sure people understood what he was saying. Let's back out a little bit, and see the context in which he develops this statement, applying dialectical logic to another phenomenon. That should really help.

> *Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere nuances have developed explicit significance within it, etc.* ***Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape.*** *The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known. The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient, etc. But not at all in the manner of those economists who smudge over all historical differences and see bourgeois relations in all forms of society. One can understand tribute, tithe, etc., if one is acquainted with ground rent. But one must not identify them. Further, since bourgeois society is itself only a contradictory form of development, relations derived from earlier forms will often be found within it only in an entirely stunted form, or even travestied.*[11]

So, as Marx is explaining in brief here, it is the development of a thing that leads to the future ability to determine things about that thing. It also grows more complex as it develops, requiring us to think about it far more in-depth. For example: In the USA today, we can now understand finance capital, globalization, and the rise and fall of the middle classes (or re-proletarianization). This was not possible in earlier epochs, as the process was not advanced enough to do so. It is the *human* anatomy, after all, that gives us a key to understanding the anatomy of the ape and not the other way around. For Marxism, it is this development, or concretization, that is key to understanding what is. And we must apply this same process of an "ascension to the concrete" regarding the concepts we develop within our minds, making sure they properly reflect the actual, concrete reality outside of them.

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11. Karl Marx. *Grundrisse*. (Penguin Books/New Left Review, 1973), 38-39.

In viewing humanity as it is, we can get a key for understanding the Bigfoot too. We can begin to understand which characteristics have changed and in what ways they've changed in our evolution. We can even see which characteristics have stuck around in some form, or their stunted form. What is our hair but the stunted form of the Bigfoot's fur, after all? What are our… uh, relatively small feet compared to their big feet?

So is Bigfoot human or not?

Our Answer to The Bigfoot Question

The name for this section may be a little misleading, now that I think about it. We didn't really even set out to get an answer, after all. Rather, we set out to prove that the only way to ask the question in any seriousness requires us to apply Marxism and dialectical logic - unless, of course, we find it fun to get hopelessly lost in circular logic that works backwards from a foregone conclusion.

Or: We can only even *ask* the Bigfoot Question from the Marxist perspective. It is only dialectical logic that shows us a key to understanding precisely what the Bigfoot is, and why we can understand humanity as the further actualization of the self-same thing. Is Bigfoot human? At an abstract level, yes. When we think about it now, yes. It is a moment in the concretization of what humanity is, from the Marxist perspective. Therefore, concretely, it is not human. This is why there are no Bigfoots actually in existence now, of course.[12] Our reflections of these moments of development, and how the effect of one cause becomes the cause going forward, are necessarily abstractions that we must make in the cognizing of a concrete whole concept. *What is humanity? What is a Bigfoot? Is it human? Is it animal?* We cannot simply stop at those reflections that are directly given to us in sensual observation in order to find out. We must think through the abstraction, develop notions of these moments, and continue on, ascending to a concrete concept of what existed in concrete reality in order to find out.

That is how we ask the question. If we are to answer it, we must begin with sensual observation - at the beginning. So, if you want my advice: go to the

12. Or are there? (Insert dramatic sound effect.)

forests of the Pacific Northwest, or up into the Himalayas, take a look around, and let me know.

7

Echoes of the Hearth: Tradition and Transformation in the Family[1]

John Molera[2]

Family structures are the most intimate and directly influential set of social relations for the human being. These structures shape our sense of morality, they often define our expectations for ourselves, and they are the bonds which together shape the forms of sociality that define our communities, our nations, and our very sense of common humanity internationally.

The human family has experienced adaptations throughout history, reflecting and participating in changes to the ways in which things are produced and the set of social relations which accompany new forms of production. The diverse

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1. This presentation was given at the Future of the Family panel in Moscow, Russia in November of 2024.

2. John Molera is a member of the Political Bureau of the American Communist Party, Executive Director of DD Geopolitics and Co-Host of the DD Geopolitics Show, and Co-Director of the ACP Legal Team. John has recently appeared as a plenary speaker at the "Inventing the Future Symposium" in Moscow, Russia where he presented on the future of diplomacy and the future of the family.

customs and traditions which have accompanied family structures at any stage of historical development reveal the innate human capacity for social experimentation to address new realities, to initiate transformations to existing sets of social relations, and to reintegrate these relationships into standards that unite and stabilize human communities.

The traditions of mankind are reflected in the traditions of the family. Activities, routines, and behaviors passed down from generation to generation are expressed through the family. Traditions are not merely memories to be held fondly, traditions are the accumulation of mankind's tried and tested practices, ways of life, and wisdoms — adapted over the course of generations — which provide a path for the success and synchronicity for human communities into the future.

The future of mankind, the future of traditions, and the future of the family all share the same fate — to either be brought forward into conformance with existing realities or to be totally extinguished like some of the tragically fated prehistoric species which came before us.

Modernity has brought the family precisely to this crossroads, where the nuclear age, the emergence of artificial intelligence, and advances in biological science simultaneously render the dissolution of the family into superfluousness, and the elevation of the family to Olympian heights, a possibility. This crossroads is expressed through the divide between the Imperialist world order of the dominant Western political institutions, and the opposing traditional, communist, and communist-adjacent societies of the global majority.[3]

Psychosis of the Western Family

In the West, we are consumed by a notion that human society is moving inexorably forward under the power of technological progress. Accompanying this notion is the myth that the institutions of the United States, Europe, and its partners are at the forefront of the evolution of progressive social relations and

3. Michael Hudson: Debt, Economic Collapse, and the End of Civilization. Robinson's Podcast. In this interview, Hudson distinguishes the fundamental question dividing nations. This is the question of what comes first, protecting the debts of creditors or making tangible capital investments? Hudson reveals that this is the central problem of today's polarized global society, and it is the common denominator of the divide between BRICS and the global majority away from the Western jungle. He cites Rosa Luxemburg to reveal that this is the divide between civilization and barbarism.

that in every field of academic endeavor we are moving forward. ”At the end of history,” he wrote, ”it is not necessary that all societies become successful liberal societies, merely that they end their ideological pretensions of representing different and higher forms of human society.”[4]

But, as is true in the economic realm and the significance of debt peonage,[5] the leading “thinkers” in the West neglect the fundamental understandings of familial human relationships from thousands of years of human history. It is this neglect, whether out of a fetishization of the past or a delusion of a future completely disconnected from the past, which is hindering forward progress in the development of social relationships, and is driving society back toward reactionary, unworkable, and unsustainable ideals for human interactions.

Far from representing the cutting edge of social relationships, the developments in Western society demonstrate a general psychosis among popular “thinkers”[6] on the topic of social relationships — a disconnect from what is possible and totally unrealistic expectations for the future. The elites directing and inhabiting prominent academic and media institutions often one-sidedly direct the blame on worsening social disunity toward American conservatives’ penchant for a kitsch nostalgia for the way things were in the past. These “enlightened ones” who cast judgements instead imagine a future completely liberated from the past and any previously held standards for families. They present a blank canvas for every individual to draw their own interpretation of human nature itself, sometimes issuing vague directives toward “compassion” and “freedom.” The mirror of this ideology, presented in the “manosphere” and outrage politics of the right, elevates complete male dominance over women in a caricature of past familial relations as the only antidote from total disconnection to our humanity.

After the cementation of liberal capitalism in the mid-21st century came the articulation and popularization of the concept of the “nuclear family.” As commonly understood in the West, the role of the nuclear family, traditionally comprised of a husband, wife, and children living in one home, has been the

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4. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, (Harlow, England; Penguin Books, 1992).

5. Michael Hudson, *...and forgive them their debts: Lending, Foreclosure and Redemption from Bronze Age Finance to the Jubilee Year,* (Philadelphia; Islet Verlag, 2018).

6. The term “thinkers” in quotations is used to demonstrate that the leading popular academics have not gained their status due to their intellectual rigor or cutting-edge insights but due to their conformance with prevailing institutional interests of the financial elites, the preservation of which is dependent on *anti*-thought.

primary arrangement for European countries dating back to 13th century England. But in the historical communal family arrangements the predated the "nuclear family," including matrilineal relationships, many of the characteristics that later came to define nuclear families had long been established. The man was expected to go defend the community, to go and obtain the means for the community to subsist and be at the forefront of political struggles and wars. Women played a prominent role in raising and nurturing children, caring for the elderly and sick, bonding the community socially, and teaching new generations basic skills and social expectations. Under the pressures of feudalism and capitalist relations, Women were generally ushered into a social position of deference to the authority of the male father or husband.

Today, the nuclear family is undercut by the dominant cultural trends, economic challenges, and social alienation brought about by Western capitalism and the social, economic, and political domination of the Western financial elites. The radical liberal intelligentsia responds to this development by throwing the baby out with the bathwater. No longer do women "hold up half the sky,"[7] but there is no half of the sky to be held up according to many radical liberals. Some go as far to evaluate that the traditions and norms that continued to develop within families in general simply precede the revolutionary moment and will be swept away entirely with the fall of capitalism but say nothing of how the dominant characteristics general to men and women respectively will be addressed.

The family itself, according in M.E. O'Brien, a purported theorist on gender and "communist" theory, becomes an "obstacle to human freedom." The family must be abolished according to this view, which means a "breaking open of the family to free and unleash what's good in it and to generalize that into the social body as a whole. To make the necessary forms of care available to everyone unconditionally."[8]

The problem the radical liberal sees is not alienation from our communities and innate abilities, but that alienation creates situation where people "are haunted by an idealized working-class life of the past: of marriage, gendered norms (male breadwinner, female homemaker), home ownership, and having children," and that this unreasonable psychological need simply needs to be overcome. Their attack is fixated on elevating the superstructure of capitalism above the base of economic relations.

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7. A quote attributed to Mao Tse Tung, likely sometime between 1950-1960 during the cultural revolution.

8. M.E. O'Brien, *Family Abolition, Capitalism, and the Communizing of Care*, (Las Vegas; Pluto Press, 2023), 11.

In condemning capitalism, they say, "the conditions of a capitalist society make the nuclear family our main source of support." Yet they don't grapple with the fact it's the same forces desperately attempting to preserve capitalism via hyper-financialization and debt servitude that are destroying traditional relationships in favor of a hyper individualized free-for-all where everyone is encouraged to live their "personal truth."[9]

For instance, the radical western liberal analysis calls into question the very institution of marriage and the norm of monogamous human relationships, not just the legal constructs of capitalism that have existed to commodify women in this type of relationship. This fixation on eliminating marriage altogether elevates the significance of marriage by emphasizing its negation as a path to a freer more harmonious society. Do these Western self-described "communists" go to the working masses themselves to reach the conclusion that the dissolution of the hetero-normative marriage is desirable? Of course not. They do not recognize that its precisely the harmonious and stabilizing elements of traditional relationships which most working people wish to preserve, and that it is the loneliness and isolation, and fragmentation of unified communities and culture standards which the working class seeks to destroy.

The radical liberals speak of the family in a similar way that American "conservatives" talk about the government. That the concept of the institution itself—and those who defend it—continues to limit our freedom. However, as the generally recognized parameters of the state set conditions where individual right and freedoms can be recognized and protected, the institution of the family also promotes freedom within a certain set of social relations and provides a buffer for weak and atomized individuals that predatory forces, whether corporate powers or rapacious individuals, would otherwise exploit.

The Stability of the Family and the State

"Marriage is a conservative institution, a way for class to reproduce itself."

But how is the ruling class being preserved today? The destruction of the social bond of marriage has *helped* the new globalist ruling class preserve itself and exploit the masses, commodify women's bodies for the benefit of corporate

9. They also ignore the canonical communist views of degeneracy and social degradation, which precisely explain the breakdown of certain traditions, the proliferation of prostitution, and alternative and individualistic lifestyles as a product of capitalist decay.

monopolies, alienate and disempower men, and produce other anti-social and maladaptive behaviors among the population which demoralize the working class.

The decline of marriage rates, and the increase of incidents of divorce are not necessarily a reflection of a more mature and progressive culture, but of a culture in disarray and turmoil. [10] Financial instability is the number one reason young people cite for waiting longer to get married or not getting married at all.[11] More marriage-aged young men are depressed and drug addicted, and more marriage-aged young women are falling into a vicious pipeline of technologized prostitution to pay off debts and make ends meet.

When it comes to divorce, the context of the rise of no-fault divorce has also accelerated social disunity. However, no-fault divorce on its own is common and quite understandable in modern societies. When people commonly live to eighty or older, have their basic needs met, and there is no longer a rigid set of property relations necessitating perpetual unity of one family unit, people may have different phases in their lives to explore different love interests or even have new families. But the opening up of divorce coupled with the neglect to provide incentives and living standards that make durable families possible has irresponsibly fragmented our society, where the future prospect of a family is unimaginable to many young working-class Americans.

In strong and ascendant states, no-fault divorce can be implemented in such a way that simultaneously allows individuals to make choices while defending the values of the society, and when appropriate preventing unnecessary and alienating outcomes. In China, official marriage registries have recently begun offering free premarital and divorce counseling to address the increase in divorces, with the recognition that divorces overall negatively impact social stability and harmony.[12] It is this synthesis of economic and social supports coupled with legal choice in countries like China which has created durable marriages that can thrive under modern conditions.

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10. "Marriage rates in the United States from 1990-2022," *Statista*, (September 23, 2024): https://www.statista.com/statistics/195951/marriage-rate-in-the-united-states-since-1990/.

11. Interestingly, more people in the "Z" generation want marriage than the previous "Millennial" generation. This could inform how the challenges of the marriage in modern times produce an underlying psychological or physiological desire for marriage that can only be unveiled by the lack of suitable conditions for it.

12. Jason Tian, "Family Laws and Regulations China 2025," *iclg*, (February 9, 2024): https://iclg.com/practice-areas/family-laws-and-regulations/china

Conversely, throughout the late 20th century and early 21st century, as America opened to socially acceptable "alternative" lifestyles, the power of capitalism financial monopolies accelerated a dissolution of social programs which provided basic economic security to many working people. Wages fell dramatically, hidden behind rising prices and falling quality, and more Americans were compelled to become concerned with feeding and housing themselves tomorrow rather than planning for the future within the context of their communities.

Today's "feminism" champions staffing women in corporate leadership positions for public relations and protecting stock valuations, reaching powerful celebrity and political status, while working women fall into debt and anxiety about the crime, drugs, and general social decay consuming their neighborhoods.

In the 1976 Republican Party convention, the Republican Party expressed "fear the government may be powerful enough to destroy our families; we know that it is not powerful enough to replace them."[13] Their concern proved valid though their actions continued to create the conditions which attacked the values they ostensibly sought to protect.

> *Families make sure our children are properly nurtured, our elderly are cared for, our cultural and spiritual heritages are perpetuated, our laws are observed, and our values are preserved.*[14]

In response to their failures to materially alter the all-consuming capitalist path, these Republicans came to demagogue cultural decay by glorifying an expired and irretrievable past. In response, the radical liberals champion and sometimes sought to accelerate the superstructural dissolution of the family, and promoted ambiguous forms of relations like "caring communities." They celebrated these scarcely affiliated communities that popped up in protest movements such as Occupy Wall Street in 2011 or Standing Rock, the Indigenous-led protest movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline, or DAPL, north of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, in 2016. But far from a panacea, these movements were failures which were soundly defeated, and the mission to create a more egalitarian and just society fell further behind.

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13. "1976 Republican Platform," *National Archives,* (1976): https://www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov/1976-republican-platform
14. *Id.*

These failures were evidence that completely “free forms of association” are not sustainable. One of the reasons for the failure of these movements was an inability to establish concrete responsibilities within the communities, and as such were steamrolled by the forces of imperialism. For today’s radical liberal, there is a tendency to idealize these movements without being brave enough to explore the reason for their failures. These failures, we can confirm from observation, were the product of the failure to concretize and particularize the forms of these “caring communities.”

Marxism as the Vanguard of Tradition and Transformation

The future family image must draw from some of the original elements of harmonious relationships. In doing so, it will look not only at traditional nuclear families that arose from industrialization, but also the more communal family models of agricultural societies and even ancient societies which predate the Industrial Revolution. Over the past centuries in Western society, we’ve seen the withering away of the family, bringing us to the varied and increasingly isolated familial structures we see today. But the individualization in the West sets up the possibility of a reconstitution of the essential family structure and intimate bonds of association in a higher form. Imagining the family in the future should reaffirm the value of traditional parenting roles that worked and respective strengths and existing inclinations of the sexes rooted historically, with the added recognition that multiple family units will likely have to work together aided by technology, to navigate economic conditions, and the failures of the Western governments to enforce the social contract. We might again see family norms and practices increasingly take on regional characteristics between or even within states in this centralized and community-based family model.

The role of the State should *not* be to craft out of whole cloth expectations for the sexes or make up new gender roles. Rather, it should be to utilize and encourage the existing general strengths of men, women, children, and the elderly, and minimize their existing weaknesses and vulnerabilities. This is the true Marxist proposition, as Marxism is not a mere ideological abstraction, but an index of historical experience. It is through an elevation of the family, not a negation of it, by which we acquire the material basis in the national, historical, and civilizational realities of America. This is same theoretical realization Lenin had as to the significance of the peasantry, or in Stalin’s promotion of national traditions and the rehabilitation of the Orthodox Church.

Friedrich Engels revealed that, "all economic circumstances (either its own personal circumstances or the general conditions of society) do not reach that which they seek but are fused in one general media in a common resultant, by this fact one cannot conclude that they are equal to zero. On the contrary, each contributes to produce the resultant, and is contained in it."[15] From this insight we glean that the way of the family will neither be reversed to the prior state nor will it be completely wiped away (the choices the current stage capitalism tries to necessitate), but the future family will instead be fused with the past in a new synthesis.

Therein lies the conservatism of Marxist-Leninist states: forced to reconcile itself with the basis of its existence, the political state of the Soviet Union reflected a "Red Tsardom," China a Confuco-Marxist state.[16]

New political innovations that bring forward the lessons of Lenin, Stalin and Mao are emerging again in America, along with a genuine left. The American Communist Party has recently recognized the need to defend the family in their new 2024 Party Program. The program states, "The Communist Party stands for the swift and merciless prosecution of criminals who terrorize American communities and families."[17] In dealing with new technologies, it states "the Communist Party stands for the promotion of healthy, positive, and family-oriented trends online."

The American Communist Party also recognizes what history of the Soviet Union and modern-day China proves but remains scandalous in the Western "left" due to ideological confusion: That Communism's legacy, far from being synonymous with the historical nihilism of contemporary Western Marxism, is the defender of the perennial traditions of mankind.

This defense has been seen not only in China and Russia, but also in Islamic civilization. It is in the sands of Gaza and the hills of Lebanon where traditional family-oriented communities fight against the imperialist Zionist entity which remains far more open to Western liberal values, recreational drug use, prostitution, and socially acceptable "alternative" lifestyles than its victims.

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15. Friedrich Engels, "Friedrich Engels to J. Bloch," September 21, 1890. (London, Socialist Standard, 1920).

16. Grayson Walker, "Marxism and Tradition," *Red America* 1(1), 2024.

17. "Program of the American Communist Party," *American Communist Party* (Presented October 12, 2024): https://acp.us/program

Central to the Western leftist critique is the fact that the family is an institution that has been critical to the functioning of capitalism— but this doesn't square with capitalism and imperialism being at its most heightened levels precisely as traditional family relationships are dissolving. Meanwhile, the nations which have preserved and brought forward traditional values of family fall decisively in the camp opposing Western imperialism.

We must understand and come to grips with the fact the proposals of a basic socialist society would create new demands for the family, and a need to bring forth the predominant characteristics of men, women , children, and the elderly in a way which complement the new state of productive relationships and broad social goals of the community in order to maintain its vitality, inter-connection, and strength.

The Dialectic of Love

The essence of Communism turned out to be the revival of the very traditions it originally endeavored to overthrow. We are seeing a similar pattern around the tenuous links between Western "left" groups and its desire to overthrow traditional notions of gender, sexuality, and family. But flame of revolution not a destructive flame, but a purifying one, which, far from consuming the historical traditions of mankind, liberated them from the modern and bourgeois rubbish which corrupted them to the core.[18]

This insight is not a novel revelation. Engels himself wrote, "if men needed only to be concerned with sex-love and no longer with property and inheritance, then monogamy would come naturally."[19] In the destruction of capitalism, Engels did not see the destruction of monogamy, man and women, or the family, but a true monogamy and a basis on which women were free to hold up half the sky free from the oppressions of capitalism. It would be free to chart forward a path on this basis, not to chart a path forward when human social distinctions had been destroyed through ideological will.

We are told in the West that "Important and radical changes in our social structure are necessary if love is to become a social and not a highly

18. Grayson Walker, "Marxism and Tradition," *Red America* 1(1), 2024.

19. "Program of the American Communist Party," *American Communist Party* (Presented October 12, 2024): https://acp.us/program

individualistic, marginal phenomena."[20] But new forms of love and commitment must be given expression through particular relationships which are suited to harmonize historical experiences to have real meaning. Without this understanding, we will find ourselves only in common disarray.

20. Lily Sanchez, "Why we Should Abolish the Family," *Current Affairs,* (September 5, 2022): https://www.currentaffairs.org/news/2022/09/why-we-should-abolish-the-family

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Atomic Theory and Realistic Man: Marx's Transcendental Viewpoint and Its Emerging Logic Towards Communism[1]

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1. This article is a phase result of the major project entrusted by the Ministry of Education's Special Research Program for Teachers of Ideological and Political Theory Courses in Universities: Research on the Excavation and Application of Outstanding Traditional Chinese Cultural Resources in the "Four Confidences" Education across Different Levels (Project No. 23SZKJFZ04).

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The freedom and comprehensive development of humanity are the central themes of Marx's lifelong critique of modernity and the core propositions of his communist thought system. Many people trace the external influences of individual others through the symbolic language evident in Marx's texts, concluding that Marx's communist ideas began during his time in Paris. However, from the perspective of its intrinsic generative logic, Marx had already developed considerable conscious awareness during his student years. Due to the obscuration of this common perspective, academia has insufficiently emphasized the process of Marx's consciousness development during his student days. Primarily, there is a lack of a comprehensive understanding of the logical structure of the original living context that gave rise to Marx's consciousness, making it impossible to analyze the theoretical connections between his internal development and transcendental systems of ideas from the perspective of Marx's subjective evolution. Instead, both direct and indirect external influences are often imaginatively attributed to the young Marx, with his doctoral dissertation frequently viewed merely as a product of external influence from Hegel or the Young Hegelians. Particularly, Marx has been depicted as an inherently omniscient atheist, due to the denial of the inevitable impact of religious faith on his consciousness. This approach precludes an understanding of Marx's dialectical sublation of the Christian worldview and, furthermore, prevents an appreciation of the intrinsic motivation that drove Marx to engage with Epicurean philosophy and the true enlightenment it provided for his worldview. To borrow from Marx's own interrogative style: Was it purely coincidental that Christianity, which inherited the Greco-Roman spirit, ruled the Western spiritual world for a thousand years? Was it accidental that all of German classical philosophy remained entangled with religious concepts? Was it by chance that utopian socialists affirmed early Christian organizations? Was it merely incidental that the members of the League of the Just predominantly came from Christian churches?

Marx's student years were the *a priori* phase of his intellectual development, during which his thought manifested itself through everyday life. The “divinity” originating from God was transformed into human freedom and comprehensive development. It was not until his encounter with Epicurean philosophy that Marx began to achieve his theoretical goal of deconstructing the divinity of nature and humanity. Building upon the realities of human society, he systematically reflected on the conflicts between theological and philosophical ideas. This marked the beginning of a thorough philosophical revolution that transcended the Hegelian system in a way distinct from the

Young Hegelians. By focusing on the context of Marx's daily life and analyzing the early emergence of his self-consciousness, it becomes evident that, even at the outset of his philosophical revolution, the freedom and comprehensive development of humans as concrete individuals in real life had already become the logical foundation for the independent evolution of his thought. This process reveals the inherent necessity of his later "inversion" of Hegel's system and the reconstruction of Feuerbach's humanist materialism. Ultimately, Marx organically integrated the conceptual achievements of his philosophical revolution with the practical experiences of European social movements, endowing the proletariat's creation of the term "communism" with meaning. This marked the inception of the construction of scientific communist theory.

I. Three Living Contexts of Marx's Emerging Consciousness During His Student Years

"Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."[3] Marx, as a real and living individual, saw the initial emergence of his consciousness deeply rooted in specific contexts of daily life. These contexts included the dominant discourse of Protestant ethics, the modern rational discourse stemming from the French Enlightenment, and the Romantic discourse from Germany's critical reflection on the Enlightenment. These three discursive systems, along with the social consciousness they embodied, played an external and objective determinative role in the generation and development of Marx's consciousness during his student years. They simultaneously internalized into Marx's initial conceptual framework, shaping his lifelong ideal and belief in the freedom and comprehensive development of humanity.

The first context is the religious tradition of the Gospel, which inspired Marx's ultimate concern for humanity. Trier, as Germany's oldest Christian diocese, had a profound religious cultural heritage. The archbishop was one of the seven Prince-Electors, and belief in God not only served as the foundation for people's spiritual lives but also underpinned state authority and was a mandatory component of moral education in schools. During high school, Marx studied religious knowledge and gained a basic understanding of Christian history. He demonstrated a clear grasp of Christian doctrines and

3. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 525.

teachings,[4] as reflected in his exam essays, where he explored the connection between Christ and believers. Marx saw this union as opening the human heart to “love … to all that is noble, to all that is great,”[5] a perspective evidently shaped by Luther's doctrine of ”justification by faith.” Luther's initial aim in reforming religion was to dismantle the spiritual authority of the Pope and the feudal hierarchy of the Catholic Church. He transformed religious devotion into the intrinsic essence of secular individuals,[6] emphasizing that Christians, through faith in God, become “perfectly free lord[s] of all” while willingly serving as “perfectly dutiful servant[s] of all,”[7] thus affirming both personal freedom and the conscious service of humanity. However, the objective result of the Reformation was the establishment and consolidation of the German state churches. Marx’s father was compelled to convert to Protestantism but maintained a faith more deeply rooted in Jewish tradition. Influenced by Kant’s rational perspective, he critically reflected on the rigid doctrines of Judaism, placing greater emphasis on the moral practice of faith. Historically, Christianity originated from the Jewish tradition of monotheistic faith, interpreting the soul's freedom after death as true freedom and placing humanity's hope for universal freedom in the otherworldly kingdom ruled by God. Despite its messianic worldview, Christianity transcended differences of gender, age, birth, and tribe, embodying a universal concern for the salvation of all humanity. It particularly offered “a way out” for the suffering to pursue spiritual freedom.[8] Jesus Christ preached the Gospel of God among the lower classes, exposing the suffering and chaos inflicted on Jewish commoners by the expansion of the Greco-Roman Empire. This reflected people’s longing for peace, justice, and light. As Jews dispersed worldwide, impoverished freemen, fugitive serfs, and slaves living in Roman cities became the early Christians. Saint-Simon therefore believed that Christianity was originally intended to organize human society in ways most beneficial to improving the lives of the poor.[9] From the Reformation to the Enlightenment, European humanism

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4. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 933.

5. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 453.

6. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 179.

7. 《路德三檄文和宗教改革》 (*Luther's Three Treatises and the Reformation*), translated by Li Yong, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2010, p. 216.

8. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 22, Beijing: People's Publishing House, p. 542.

9. 《圣西门选集》 (*Selected Works of Saint-Simon*), Vol. 3, translated by Dong Guoliang and Zhao Mingyuan, Beijing: Commercial Press, 1985, p. 181.

shifted its focus on human concerns from the afterlife to the present world. This practical grasp of the freedom and development of the common people became the theoretical foundation and goal of Marx's later construction of communist doctrine.

The second context is the modern rationality of the Enlightenment, which inspired Marx's independent consciousness of individual freedom. The 18th century was the era of bourgeois intellectual enlightenment, during which French Enlightenment thinkers established individual reason as the sole standard of judgment. They opposed the divine authority of Christianity and its theological systems in the realm of social consciousness, and feudal production relations and hierarchies in the realm of social existence. With“elegant words” and “seductive promises,”[10] they constructed a rationally governed kingdom of freedom, reflecting the modern citizen's aspiration to determine their actions through reason in daily life. The Rhineland region, where Marx was born, was a frontier of the German Enlightenment. Shortly before his birth, it had been temporarily annexed and ruled by France, exposing its citizens to long-term influences of rationalism and liberalism. Marx’s father fully embraced the power of reason and was deeply immersed in the liberal atmosphere of French politics, religion, life, and art.[11] He adopted Kantian rational logic and saw himself not as a “fanatical religious believer” but as someone who regarded faith in God as “a great moral force” and “a genuine human necessity.”[12] At the Trier Gymnasium where Marx studied, liberal Enlightenment ideas were also prevalent. The headmaster and history teacher, Wyttenbach, was a follower of Kantian philosophy and attempted to reform education according to rationalist principles.[13] Many teachers, including those in religious subjects, shared similar intellectual leanings. Meanwhile, ”Hegelianism”[14] was gaining an unrivaled dominance in German academia and permeating various disciplines. At the University of Berlin, where Marx pursued further studies, the Hegelian system of speculative philosophy was at its peak. Marx’s favorite professor, Gans, worked on reconstructing the rational logic and freedom perspectives of

10. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 3, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 531.

11. *[英]* 麦克莱伦：《马克思主义以前的马克思》 (*David McLellan: Marx Before Marxism*), Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 1992, pp. 27–29.

12. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 518.

13. *[法]* 科尔纽：《马克思恩格斯传》第 *1* 卷 (*Cornu: Biography of Marx and Engels*, Vol. 1), Beijing: Sanlian Bookstore, 1980, p. 59.

14. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 4, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 273.

Hegel's spiritual kingdom in jurisprudence and history. His closest friend, Bruno Bauer, following Strauss, engaged in relentless criticism of Christianity. Marx's interactions with the Young Hegelians increasingly drew him toward the radical goal of abolishing traditional religion and the existing state, steering German philosophy toward the emancipation of humanity. It is evident that Marx's awareness of freedom was formed within the Enlightenment contexts of his family and school. His initial understanding of the issue of freedom was directly influenced by his father and teachers. His intellectual trajectory also reflected the developmental logic of German philosophy after Kant. The Hegelian system, as the culmination of German philosophy, provided Marx with a rational dialectical method and historical perspective. The contradiction between reason and reality became the logical starting point for Marx's efforts to address universal human freedom and consistently drove the scientific construction of his communist theory.

The third context is the Romantic emphasis on perfect individuality, which inspired the comprehensive development of Marx's transcendental consciousness. Romanticism served as a critique of the Enlightenment, with early German Romantics ironically challenging modern rationality's tendency to homogenize everything. They advocated for the expression of each person's perfect individuality through poetic language, reflecting the demands for comprehensive development arising after the Industrial Revolution. Marx's father was described as a "Protestant with a Lessing-style faith."[15] His neighbor and close friend, Baron von Westphalen, was also a "paternal-like friend"[16] to Marx. Both frequently guided young Marx in studying the works of Voltaire, Racine, Homer, and Shakespeare, fostering an early love for Romanticism.[17] At the University of Bonn, Marx deliberately chose to take courses from August Schlegel, a key Romantic figure. Schlegel criticized the Enlightenment for reducing human existence and the world to economic principles, materialism, and mathematical forms, subordinating human goodness and virtue to utilitarian and practical purposes. Instead, he advocated for a historical perspective to understand the vitality of human life and the natural laws of civilization, emphasizing that the poet's work lies in "perfectly

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15. *[英]* 麦克莱伦:《马克思传》(*David McLellan: Karl Marx: His Life and Thought*), Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2016, p. 7.

16. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 9.

17. 《回忆马克思》 (*Reminiscences of Marx*), Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2005, p. 218.

creating individual in the true sense."[18] His brother Friedrich Schlegel further asserted that each person should "walk their own path in the most individual way."[19] Influenced by Romanticism, Marx immersed himself in literary works, including extensive histories, and even aspired to be a poet. He became deeply involved in poetry creation for a time, prompting his father to hope he would fulfill the noble duties of a poet, using his extraordinary "talents to achieve personal perfection."[20] In Marx's early poems, symbolic metaphors such as darkness and light, oceans of suffering and distant horizons, beauty, and the sublime pervade, reflecting his satire of real-life constraints and his pursuit of perfect individuality. They reveal an idealistic view of love, life, and the world, especially through the imagery of poets Schiller and Goethe. These figures symbolized the entanglement of reality and ideals in his inner world. Heine believed that Schiller's works embodied freedom, historical progress, and cosmopolitanism, while Goethe meticulously endowed each character with "independent value" and "unique perfection."[21] Marx later pointed out that the Romantics nostalgically clung to the "primitive richness"[22] of humanity's early developmental stages. In contrast, he grounded his views in the inevitable processes of historical movement. He redefined concepts such as reason, self, and spirit in terms of the social practice of individuals transforming the real world. He identified true richness as the realization of human freedom and comprehensive development, confirming it as the ideal of the communist society.

II. The Questioning Nature of Marx's Rational Awareness and His Thinking Pathway

The processes of real-life provide objective conditions and materials for human consciousness and thought activities. However, consciousness itself can "really

18. 《德国浪漫主义作品选》 (*Selected Works of German Romanticism*), edited by Sun Fengcheng, Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1997, p. 396.

19. *[德]* 施勒格尔:《浪漫派风格》 (*Schlegel: Romantic Style*), translated by Li Bojie, Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 2005, p. 195.

20. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 563.

21. *[德]* 亨利希·海涅:《浪漫派》 (*Heinrich Heine: The Romantic School*), translated by Xue Hua, Beijing: Commercial Press, 2016, p. 50.

22. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 8, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 56.

represents something without representing something real"[23]—in other words, thought can transcend the constraints and limitations of the real world to independently create a conceptual world. Marx's awareness of human freedom and comprehensive development initially manifested as pure idealistic imagination, divorced from reality. However, the tension between ideals and reality in his consciousness gave rise to a series of logical problems. These issues guided his thinking from Kant's dualism toward Hegel's dialectics. For the first time, the logical relationship between the kingdom of freedom and the kingdom of necessity emerged as a foundational proposition in his conceptual framework.

Firstly, in the realm of Romantic literary creation, Marx became aware of the opposition between what ought to be and what currently exists. Through his family and high school education, Marx was inevitably influenced by the dominant discourses of his time. The interaction between the religiously transcendental ethical concepts and the rational experiences of secular life prompted him to consciously reflect on the unfortunate conflict between human principles in spirit and in flesh, as well as the challenges of overcoming this conflict. He aligned with the general norms of social consciousness, viewing work for the happiness of humanity as a guiding principle for achieving personal perfection.[24] However, at this stage, he had not yet formed a comprehensive understanding of the entirety of human social reality. Amid the Romantic atmosphere at the University of Bonn, Marx began to consciously observe his entire personal life world as "an expression of fully revealed spiritual activity."[25] At this time, an unattainable and hopeless world of love ignited his imagination. To him, nothing in the real world was as "beautiful" as Jenny. Marx developed a profound interest in poetry, the art form most celebrated by the Romantics. Friedrich Schlegel believed that a part of the poet resides within everyone, radiating the creative vitality of poetry, while in the depths of the human spirit lies "the source of imagination and the ideal of beauty."[26] The subject of imagination was undoubtedly the "self," and Fichte's philosophical interpretation of the "self" as the absolute subject became an authoritative perspective in the Romantic movement. The creative activity of

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23. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 534.

24. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 459.

25. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 5.

26. *[德]* 施勒格尔：《浪漫派风格》 (*Schlegel: Romantic Style*), translated by Li Bojie, Beijing: Huaxia Publishing House, 2005, p. 186.

the "self" dominated Romantic imagination.[27] In his poetry collection dedicated to Jenny, Marx crafted stories of tragic love and spiritual struggles of individual characters, satirizing the constraints imposed by temporal and spatial distance, mortal destiny, religious ethics, worldly matters, and societal scrutiny on the freedom of love. He integrated symbols of divine blessings, sunlight, the flame of freedom, and the yearning of the soul into the divine ideal of perfect love. In the poetry collection dedicated to his father, Marx broadened his intellectual horizon to imagine the spirit of the world. He passionately sang of the natural divinity of all things, celebrated the boundless creativity of the human spirit in its pursuit of happiness, the sublime, and perfection, while mercilessly mocking the Gospel of God, secular morality, traditional prejudices, and scientific rationality for neglecting human spiritual freedom and comprehensive development. Marx explicitly stated that, in his purely poetic imagination, he sharply opposed what ought to be with what currently exists. This inherent contradiction of idealism became the epistemological foundation for his division of the world.[28] It later served as the logical premise for his philosophical reflection on Romanticism, a journey of conscious philosophical thought that began with Fichte.

Secondly, in the metaphysical study of law, Marx became aware of the relationship between the conceptual form and reality itself. The Jewish faith practice, rooted in divinely revealed legal principles and covenantal relationships, along with the legal professions pursued by his predecessors, undoubtedly shaped Marx's initial consciousness regarding law. After choosing to study law, Marx began consciously reflecting on what he referred to as the "metaphysics known as law."[29] Initially, his dominant intellectual framework was rooted in Romanticism, which subjectively opposed the ideal form of law to existing law, stripping law of all practical content and form. He attempted to construct the perfect spirit of law and present its complete system purely in imagination. Fichte's conceptual formalism in legal theory became Marx's preferred intellectual model. Starting from the self, Fichte deduced the legal relationships and principles between rational beings, illustrating that legal norms are laws of freedom rather than natural laws.[30] In philosophical

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27. *[英]以赛亚·柏林:《浪漫主义的根源》* (*Isaiah Berlin: The Roots of Romanticism*), translated by Lü Liang et al., Nanjing: Yilin Press, 2008, pp. 97–98.

28. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 7.

29. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 7.

30. 《费希特文集》 (*Collected Works of Fichte*), Vol. 2, compiled and translated by Liang Zhixue, Beijing: Commercial Press, 2014, p. 349.

imagination, this approach speculatively establishes the absolute concept and conceptual system of law, encompassing the objective reality represented by various substantive laws. Marx, however, based his exploration on the contractual relationships between freely determined subjects, constructing his own legal framework. His initial system structure was similar to Kant's *Metaphysical Elements of Justice*, but his overall approach and specific explanations were entirely aligned with Fichte. It is evident that Marx sought to reconstruct Kantian legal theory through Fichte's philosophy. At the same time, Marx was inspired by Savigny, a prominent figure in the historical school of jurisprudence. Savigny viewed Roman law as a coherent whole, embodying the comprehensive development of self-realization. He argued that jurists must possess two scientific qualities: a historical understanding grounded in reality and a systematic vision, enabling them to discard deceptive illusions in philosophical thought.[31] In contrast, Gans—another influential figure—focused on Hegel's philosophy, advocating for the freedom of spirit, historical perspectives, and the philosophy of law. The debates between Savigny and Gans attracted Marx's attention to Roman legal codes. However, Marx insisted that the formal definitions of concepts and their substantive provisions could be separated and must develop "independently of each other."[32] He believed this approach would allow him to integrate Roman legal concepts, devoid of substantive provisions, into his own conceptual framework. Nevertheless, when Marx began categorizing and organizing substantive law, he found that "the spirit and truth of the law disappeared." By the end of substantive private law, he observed "the falsehood of the whole system."[33] His attempts to reconstruct a new metaphysical legal system ended in failure once again. Marx was compelled to recognize the fundamental flaws in his thinking process. He realized that objects possess an inherent unity, richness, and completeness. He also became aware that only historical dialectics could resolve such contradictions. Consequently, he decided to move away from idealism and "turn to reality itself to seek concepts."[34] This shift brought him into engagement with the philosophical frameworks of Schelling and Hegel.

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31. *[德]* 萨维尼：《论方法与法学的当代使命》 (*Savigny: On Method and the Contemporary Mission of Jurisprudence*), translated by Xu Zhangrun, Beijing: China Legal Publishing House, 2001, p. 37.

32. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 9.

33. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 11.

34. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 13.

Finally, through the integration of art and science, Marx became aware of the dialectical unity between freedom and necessity. The conceptual conflict between modern European humanistic art and natural science, combined with the historical contradiction between Germany's traditional religious faith and secular order, deepened the dualistic opposition in people's consciousness between spiritual freedom and natural necessity. The theoretical aim of German philosophical speculation was to resolve this contradiction. While studying jurisprudence, Marx realized that without philosophy, deeper understanding was impossible. He attempted to incorporate a philosophy of law across the entire field of law, inevitably revisiting and delving into Kant's antinomies. In reflecting on the causality and purposiveness of the world's origin, Kant proposed *a priori* freedom and derived absolute necessity through the causality and purposiveness of the natural sequence.[35] He viewed these as the basis of judgment for genius artistic imagination and natural scientific knowledge, respectively, synthesizing them into the beautiful ideal of a universal kingdom for rational beings.[36] This ideal, however, became something "beyond" the grasp of human understanding.[37] Fichte attempted to overcome Kant's dualism and agnosticism through intellectual intuition. Based on the absolute form of "A = A," he established the subject-object unity of the self and its consciousness, arguing that humanity's ultimate purpose is to universally recognize and return to its "true (absolute) freedom."[38] He concluded that rational beings, through genius imagination and scientific knowledge, would actively create a singular union that harmoniously governs nature—a kingdom of freedom. Marx regarded Fichte's philosophical starting point as an "unscientific form of mathematical dogmatism." He believed that it dissolved the vivid content of real phenomena and thus became "an obstacle to understanding truth."[39] Schelling complemented and extended Fichte's subjective idealism with his objective idealism, drawing Marx's attention. Schelling's philosophy sought to spiritualize natural necessity, dialectically unifying subjective imagination with objective reality through the creative activity of the rational self in the progressive development of human history. He attributed the highest unity of

35. *[德]* 康德：《纯粹理性批判》 (*Kant: Critique of Pure Reason*), translated by Deng Xiaomang, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2017, pp. 285, 291.

36. *[德]* 康德：《道德形而上学的奠基》 (*Kant: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*), translated by Yang Yunfei, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2013, p. 113.

37. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 3, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 17.

38. 《费希特文集》 (*Collected Works of Fichte*), Vol. 3, compiled and translated by Liang Zhixue, Beijing: Commercial Press, 2014, p. 644.

39. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 8.

freedom and necessity—the pinnacle of absolute objectivity—to the genius of artistic works.[40] Marx likely grasped Schelling's concept of aesthetic intuition and its relationship with intellectual intuition. He recognized that his previous artistic creations relied on rhetorical technique rather than poetic conception.[41] As a result, he sought to reengage in genuine artistic creation, exploring various forms such as music, novels, and drama. Subsequently, Marx partially integrated science and art, producing a groundbreaking long-form dialogue that explored the origin of philosophy (freedom) and the development of necessity. He aimed to dialectically reveal "the divinity expressed in concepts, religion, nature, and history." He concluded that his "final proposition was the beginning of the Hegelian system," and thus referred to it as "what should have been a new logic."[42] This indicates that Marx had already become aware of the foundational problems of worldview and methodology.

III. The Theoretical Orientation and Practical Focus of Marx's Doctoral Thesis

Engels observed that Hegel's greatest achievement was the restoration of dialectics as the highest form of thought, thereby for the first time portraying the entire world of nature, history, and spirit as a process. However, Hegel failed to uncover the inherent regularity underlying apparent contingencies.[43] In the post-Hegelian era, Hegel's system showed signs of disintegration similar to those seen in the post-Aristotelian period. Marx initially mocked Hegel for merely seeking to comprehend the "ordinary, everyday things encountered on the streets."[44] Marx, through a circuitous path starting with Fichte, moving through Kant, and then Schelling, was ultimately "lured into the enemy's camp," starting with a self-conscious engagement in what he called his "new logic." Building upon the foundation of the Hegelian system, Marx traced the entire historical progression of ancient Greek philosophy, gaining insight into the significance of Stoicism, Skepticism, and particularly Epicurean philosophy

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40. *[德]* 谢林：《先验唯心论体系》 (*Schelling: System of Transcendental Idealism*), translated by Liang Zhixue and Shi Quan, Beijing: Commercial Press, 2009, p. 313.

41. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 7.

42. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 13.

43. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 9, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, pp. 22, 26–27.

44. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 736.

for the theoretical and practical challenges of the post-Hegelian era. This journey enabled Marx to initiate an independent reflection that culminated in a philosophical revolution transcending Hegel.

Firstly, through a comprehensive examination of ancient Greek philosophy, Marx affirmed the Enlightenment significance of Epicurus's thorough atheism. Kant described Enlightenment as humanity's emancipation from self-imposed immaturity and its courage to independently use reason.[45] Hegel, building on the notion of rational freedom, regarded ancient Greece as the origin of true philosophy,[46] integrating the entire history of philosophy into his system and attempting to reconcile religion and philosophy within the framework of absolute spirit. The Young Hegelians increasingly adopted a radical critical stance aligned with the Enlightenment movement. Strauss eliminated supernatural miracles from the stories of Jesus, while Bauer relentlessly criticized the Gospels and epistles, arguing that Christianity was the "own product"[47] of the Greco-Roman world. Marx, already deeply familiar with ancient Greek art, further deepened his understanding of ancient Greek philosophy through his interactions with the Young Hegelians. Unlike Hegel, who placed great emphasis on the flourishing period of Greek philosophy from the perspective of absolute spirit, Marx viewed the three major philosophical schools following Aristotle—Stoicism, Skepticism, and Epicureanism—as the "key to understanding the true history of Greek philosophy."[48] Marx especially admired Epicurean philosophy. Drawing on Prometheus's declaration, Marx highlighted Epicurus's assertion that "self-consciousness is higher than all heavenly and earthly gods." He mocked Gassendi for cloaking Epicurus in "the black robes of a Christian nun" and criticized Plutarch for dragging Epicurean philosophy "into the religious courtroom." Epicurus proclaimed that popular opinions about the gods were nothing but "empty assumptions" and emphasized that inner pleasure and tranquility are "the first innate good" and "the ultimate goal of a happy life."[49] He opposed the notion of imagining or perceiving some fearsome natural power controlling celestial phenomena. To

45. *[德]* 康德：《历史理性批判文集》 (*Kant: Essays in Historical Rational Criticism*), translated by He Zhaowu, Beijing: Commercial Press, 1996, pp. 24, 29.

46. *[德]* 黑格尔：《哲学史讲演录》第 *1* 卷 (*Hegel: Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 1), translated by He Lin, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2013, p. 98.

47. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 4, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 483.

48. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 11.

49. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 40, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1982, p. 30.

Marx, Epicurus's self-consciousness represented a thorough atheism because it rejected the unity and eternity of the celestial bodies themselves.[50] This stance stood in direct opposition to the prevalent beliefs of the Greek people, not only surpassing the Pythagoreans, Plato, and Aristotle in their religious views of the heavens but also exceeding the contemporary Stoics and Skeptics in their interpretations of divinity. Moreover, Marx believed that even the modern proofs of God's existence—whether transcendental or a priori—offered by Descartes, Kant, and other modern philosophers represented a degeneration of reason. Such arguments merely reaffirmed human self-consciousness as proof or illustration of human essence.[51] Hegel had pointed out that the ancient world originated in nature, while the modern era began with spirit. Marx further emphasized that Epicurus's irreverence toward nature symbolized "a rupture with substantial, pure life," signifying "a liberation from the shackles of blind faith."[52] Hence, Marx declared Epicurus to be "the greatest Enlightenment thinker of ancient Greece."[53] In Marx's view, only by fully implementing atheism in both theoretical speculation and practical activity could one truly transcend the Hegelian system.

Secondly, Marx reinterpreted the theory of atomic deviation to establish the concept of human freedom as the creator of world history. Marx's study of Hegelian philosophy was fundamentally aimed at proving the solid foundation of human spiritual essence.[54] Hegel emphasized that the essence of spirit is freedom but conceived absolute spirit as an eternal, singular, and universal entity, uniting subject and object.[55] He presented this concept in the form of thinking self-consciousness and manifested it in the actuality of self-determined free will. World history, in this view, was reduced to the rationalization of absolute spirit realizing itself. Bauer, returning to Fichte's notion of the absolute self-identity of the ego, elevated self-consciousness into an entity, unifying externalized free will with internal self-consciousness. He positioned

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50. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, pp. 58, 59.

51. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 101.

52. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 40, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1982, p. 52.

53. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 63.

54. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 13.

55. *[德]* 黑格尔：《哲学科学百科全书 *3*：精神哲学》 (*Hegel: Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Vol. 3: Philosophy of Spirit*), translated by Yang Zutao, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2015, p. 325.

self-consciousness itself as the ”omnipotent creator” of the world,[56] theoretically revealing the human subjectivity and creativity obscured in Hegel's metaphysical framework. However, practically, this interpretation did not go beyond Hegel’s speculative boundaries. Hegel pointed out that the common principle of post-Aristotelian philosophies was “the pure relationship of self-consciousness to itself.”[57] The Young Hegelians resonated strongly with these philosophical systems, and Marx acknowledged that these schools of thought still “fully enjoy their spiritual citizenship in the modern world,” as they comprehensively expressed “all the moments” and “the complete structure” of self-consciousness.[58] Marx paid particular attention to Epicurean philosophy, where the deviation of the atom from its straight path symbolized “free will,” the “soul of the atom,” the “specific entity,” and the “true essence of the atom,”[59] which represented the genuine starting point of world creation. According to Marx, only Lucretius correctly articulated the formal definition of Epicurus's atomic concept. He explained that atoms, as the material origin, move eternally in infinite void. However, as the foundation of spirit, they occasionally and spontaneously deviate from their straight paths during motion, thereby breaking free from the constraints and domination of deterministic fate. Only through such deviations could atoms collide and generate the diversity of the world. Marx further noted that Epicurus’s philosophy was centered on the principle of “self-determined existence,” which was both unique and direct. Atoms and the void represented the concretization of existence and thought. Deviation was the intrinsic antagonism and struggle of atoms, and the mutual repulsion among numerous atoms was the inevitable realization of the law of atomic deviation. This repulsion, Marx argued, was the primordial form of self-consciousness.[60] At this stage, Marx was no longer content with developing self-consciousness merely within the speculative realm. He began to regard self-consciousness as the free spirit of humanity, actively creating the world. This perspective foreshadowed a dialectical negation of the Hegelian system on the theoretical level and implied practical opposition to the existing world, which represented the fixed form of absolute spirit.

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56. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, p. 343.

57. *[德]* 黑格尔：《哲学史讲演录》第 *3* 卷 (*Hegel: Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 3), translated by He Lin, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2013, p. 6.

58. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 16.

59. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 40, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1982, p. 121.

60. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 37.

Thirdly, by reflecting on the figures of ancient Greek philosophers, Marx affirmed the self-realization and comprehensive development of individual freedom. Epicurus's concept of the atom held dual significance, encompassing both spiritual essence and material elements. The motion of countless atoms deviating from straight paths negated all predetermined relations, objectified their intrinsic contradictions, and restructured the entire "kingdom of atoms." In this process, time, as the contingency of contingencies, became the "absolute form of the phenomenal world."[61] In Marx's view, the spirit of freedom that runs through Epicurean philosophy is abstract and individual self-consciousness,[62] which represents the general form of many individual consciousnesses as self-determined existence. Humans, as individuals, are both natural material entities constituting the real world and manifestations of the free spirit of the essential world. It is through self-consciousness that humans break away from the relative determinations of desire and nature, becoming the sole real object of their own existence. Moreover, humans transform their mutual relationships of repulsion into ones of contracts and friendship, continuously realizing the spirit of freedom and creating world history as self-determined subjects. For Epicurus, sensory perception was the ultimate standard, and the world was a real, objective phenomenon. Thus, he consistently departed from deterministic premises to find satisfaction in the contingent joys and happiness of life. In contrast, Democritus viewed the sensory world as a subjective illusion, reducing everything to necessity beyond existence, even to the extent of blinding himself to maintain the purity of rational judgment. Their philosophical consciousness was vividly embodied in their respective figures as philosophers. A philosopher, akin to a creator, represents an entity imbued with the world's ideal purpose and supreme good. Freedom as an entity, in turn, was the soul of Greek life and Greek spirit.[63] Marx clarified that early Greek philosophers merely expressed the substantive spirit of the world of human life in conceptual terms. These conceptualized substantive spirits ascended in Socrates to become subjective spirit, standing in opposition to the multitude and the realities of life. Plato sought to incorporate existence and its realms into the ideal world, hoping to materialize them in the philosopher-king's utopia. From Aristotle onward, the rational concept and its definitions began to infiltrate individual consciousness through empirical

61. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 52.

62. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1995, p. 63.

63. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 40, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 1982, p. 63.

experience. Epicurus, however, completely eliminated all preconditions and external premises, internalizing all conceptuality and necessity into undifferentiated self-consciousness. In his own substantive life, he embodied the passive movement of every free individual toward fully developing their nature. From this, Marx derived a positive philosophical revolutionary stance: philosophers should be committed to changing the world. Individuals must unite as subjects in practice to abolish private property and class distinctions, enabling every person to achieve true freedom and comprehensive development. This vision later became the theoretical foundation and practical goal of what Marx termed “communism.”

IV. Conclusion and Further Reflections

Marx’s student years marked the initial stage of his conscious awareness, a process intrinsically centered on the themes of human freedom and comprehensive development. Objectively, this development was inseparable from the context of his daily life within his family and school environment. At that time, the dominant social consciousness in Germany was undergoing the ongoing influence of French intellectual Enlightenment and political revolutionary movements. The prevailing Protestant ethics were being critically examined by modern rationality, while Romanticism opposed the deconstruction and materialization of spiritual entities by modern rationality. These social currents were reflected in the words and actions of Marx's father, teachers, and friends. From the beginning, Marx held a vague rational attitude toward the religious faith of Messianism. However, he maintained a particularly strong and lasting interest in Romantic artistic creation, as the seeds of individual freedom and the perfection of personality were already planted in his consciousness in the form of idealism. In his legal studies, Marx sought to reconstruct Kant's metaphysics of law through Fichte's model of the self, a natural outcome of the germination of his idealistic inclinations. Yet, at this stage, he could no longer rely on Romantic imagination. He was compelled to address a series of contradictions—between what ought to be and what is, between concepts and reality, and between freedom and necessity—through scientific methods. Marx realized that philosophy was indispensable for understanding the essence of things. Consequently, he delved deeply into the philosophical ideas of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling, which eventually led him, along the logical path of German philosophy, toward Hegel’s philosophical system, albeit with lingering doubts about the “divine.” Initially, Marx was not

particularly fond of what he considered the strange and convoluted style of Hegel.[64] During this intellectual journey, Marx experienced two major detours and two significant leaps. The first was from law to art, followed by a leap to philosophy. The second was a detour through Fichte and Kant, culminating in a leap from Schelling to Hegel. The logical pivot of this progression was the transformation of the subject, represented by Epicurus's atomic theory, which symbolized the real, specific, and concrete human being in everyday life.

Hegel firmly believed that this creative transitional era was nurturing a new world. He argued that the world spirit had already passed through the stages of subjective creation in art and comprehensive representation in religion and was now progressing toward the stage of absolute truth in philosophy. Philosophy, crowned as the science of sciences, served as true theodicy, with its "ultimate goal and interest lying in reconciling thought, concept, and reality."[65] For Hegel, this philosophical reconciliation was internal and earthly. Only by scientifically eliminating all alienated essences and breaking with historical traditions could the world spirit, as absolute spirit, fully realize its essence of freedom in reality, enabling absolute self-consciousness to unify with finite self-consciousness. The Young Hegelians inherited Hegel's "revolutionary" legacy, committing themselves to the historical transition from religion to philosophy and from Christ to humanity. They increasingly adopted radical critiques of religious tradition in pursuit of the full realization of spiritual freedom. Among them, Bauer absolutized human self-consciousness as the foundation for creating the world. However, this "human" remained an abstract being detached from the world, and Bauer's "self-consciousness" was merely a reflection of his critical principles and conceptual activity.[66] Consequently, he logically despised the "ignorant" masses, viewing popular rule as the end of philosophy and the negation of freedom. Through his study of ancient Greek philosophy, particularly Epicurus's atomic theory, Marx affirmed that "man" is a sensual being living in the real world. He argued that each individual possesses self-consciousness and free will. Building on this, Marx transformed Hegel's retrospective notion of reconciliation into a practical goal for future action, revealing the inevitable development of the materialist conception of history. This marked the beginning of Marx's thorough philosophical

64. 《马克思恩格斯全集》 (*Complete Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 47, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2004, p. 13.

65. 黑格尔:《哲学史讲演录》第 *4* 卷 (*Hegel: Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 4), translated by He Lin, Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2013, p. 376.

66. 《马克思恩格斯文集》 (*Collected Works of Marx and Engels*), Vol. 1, Beijing: People's Publishing House, 2009, pp. 3, 346.

revolution, independent of the Young Hegelians. In subsequent political struggles, Marx quickly demonstrated a more progressive stance than figures like Strauss, Bauer, and Feuerbach. He consistently represented the people, actively advocating for all spiritual, political, and economic rights of freedom. Admittedly, Marx's philosophical discourse was inevitably influenced by German classical philosophy. However, this does not mean that his philosophical thought was entirely derived from it. In essence, Marx's thinking was independent, systematic, and coherent. His reflections on the post-Christian era's themes of human freedom and comprehensive development were deeply rooted in ancient Greek philosophy. These reflections were later concretized into the scientific theory of the communist historical movement through his resolute revolutionary practice to transform reality.

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